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THE
COMPLETE WORKS
OF
REV. DANIEL A. CLARK,
WITH
A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
AND AN ESTIMATE OF HIS POWERS AS A PREACHER,

BY
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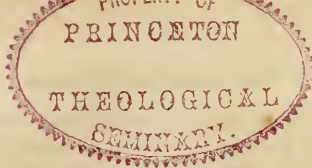
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SERMONS.

SERMON XLII.

THE ENEMIES OF THE CHURCH MADE TO PROMOTE HER INTERESTS.

ISAIAH X. 5—12.

O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few. For he saith, are not my princes altogether kings? Is not Calno as Carchemish? is not Hamath as Arpad? is not Samaria as Damascus? As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria; shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols? Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon Mount Zion, and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.

WE sometimes discover, in a scrap of sacred story, a rich and lucid comment upon the essential doctrines of revelation. The simple statements of facts, dissipates the darkness that obscured the ways of God, and removes the cloud behind which rolls the wheels of Providence. Let us only read of what God, by his immediate agency, or by the agency of others, has *done*, and we shall find very little mystery in all he has *said*. The *doctrines* are nothing more than the general principles of the Divine administration. The moment men put themselves in the attitude of quarrel with what God has *said*, they invariably tax themselves with the necessity of denying what he has *done*. The father who returns to his house, and finds his beloved child a corpse, and still denies the sovereignty of God, proves himself a pitiable reasoner. A doctrine so pointedly illustrated, can no longer be matter of doubt, unless he choose to believe a lie.

The history of the Assyrian invasion, foreseen and described by the prophet in the text and context, is one of those expository Scriptures, which illustrate and confirm, what are erroneously termed the hard doctrines of revelation. God is here seen in the attitude of administering correction to his people, and using wicked men as the staff, destined like any other rod to be committed to the fire, when the children are reduced to obedience. If instead of intending to bless the people of God, they mean not so, mean no service to their Maker, but their own elevation, intend to injure whom they hate, all this does not disqualify them to be the sword of the Lord. There is something fearfully interesting in the Divine sovereignty, thus illustrated by the very finger of God himself. We must either believe what God has spoken on this subject, or deny what he has done, and what he is doing daily before our very eyes.

I must detain you a few moments, on the historical facts in the case, and then notice more largely the doctrines they inculcate.

I. *We attend to the historical facts.* God had a church in the family of Abraham, but they were so wicked, that he styles them in the text a hypocritical nation. He would correct them for their sins, and would employ for this purpose Sennacherib the king of Assyria, the very staff they had leaned on. But that prince would intend no such good to the covenant people of God; his object would be devastation and plunder. It was in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few. He boasted, and heaven knew his impudence, that his power was great, his victories numerous and splendid, his princes, monarchs, and the gods all too weak to resist him. And the worst is yet to be spoken, he threatened that he would do to Jerusalem's God as he had done to the deities around him. How contemptible must he have appeared to him who sitteth in the heavens. Thus the axe boasted itself against him that hewed with it, the saw against him that shook it, and the rod threatened him who lifted it up.

God now resolved that when he had chastised Israel for their idolatry, and their waywardness, he would curse the Assyrian for his pride. He might live till he had performed all the Divine will upon Mount Zion, and upon Jerusalem, then God would punish the fruit of his stout heart, and bring down the glory of his high looks.

God would make him know that he was a mere worm, that an Almighty arm, and not his own, had gotten him his victories, and

that all his wrath toward the people of God, must meet a final and a fearful judgment.

When God speaks in the text of *sending* that proud and impious man, to chastise his people, we are not to understand that God would command him to go, or justify the motives by which he would be actuated. God does not punish as a *crime*, the very deed which his injunction renders *duty*. It is believed that nothing more is meant, than that God would so order events, that the Assyrian should hope to gratify his avarice and his pride in humbling Jerusalem. The history tells for itself, that the king had one purpose, and the King of kings another, and that God kept his own purpose a secret from the miscreant whom he used as his rod.

Why was he not sent of God, precisely in the same sense as God hardened the heart of Pharaoh ? by the concurrence of events, that should have produced a contrary resolve. The Egyptian's heart was hardened by means that should have softened it : by alternate judgments and mercies, that should have rendered him one of the holiest men that has lived. So the Assyrian was sent, by an agency that should have rendered him Jerusalem's warmest friend. God had given him victory over the idols whose shrines he had assaulted, and made him rich with the spoil. He should then have honored the God of battles, and should have come to Jerusalem to worship his Benefactor. He should have been content, when he had been suffered to spoil the temples of idolatry.

But these very successes made him covet the treasures of Jerusalem, and thus had the very opposite effect which they should and *would* have had, upon a benevolent and holy mind. There is a parallel case in Jeremiah. The Church had forfeited the favor of God, and must go into captivity. Babylon must lead them captive, and when Israel should be humbled, must be punished for making war with the people of God. Read the twenty-fifth chapter of Jeremiah, and you will have the facts in a shape more interesting, than that in which any comment can place them.

Thus God employs wicked men in the service of his people, while they mean far otherwise, and are in fact the agents of another prince. Still God holds them accountable, restrains their wrath when it will not praise him, and finally does his whole pleasure, precisely as though the agents he employed were his trusty and devoted servants. How calculated are such facts to beget respect for the character and ways of God ! How do they corroborate the doctrines of revelation, and humble the pride of man !

It is a solemn and bitter reflection, that the people of God must

be so frequently and severely chastised. That God should term them a hypocritical nation, and the people of his wrath, and let loose upon them the armies of idolatry, to scatter and peal them. But God will assuredly take care of his own people, and though many may perish who profess his name ; still where he has begun a good work, he will not fail to employ the best means and the best agents, till the work be consummated, and the happy subjects are brought home to his kingdom.

II. *There are several doctrines that these facts inculcate, which now claim our particular attention ; each prominently suggested in the text.* There is an important sense in which unregenerate men are the servants of the most high God. He employs them to bless his people. They mean not so. While they are doing their work, God restrains them. When their work is done, as God intended it should be, he will punish them for not doing his pleasure from right motives.

1. *There is an important sense in which unregenerate men are the servants of the most high God.* This general truth is seen distinctly in the service done by the Assyrian for backsliding Israel. God would send him, and would give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.

In support of the proposition, that ungodly men are the servants of the Lord, we say, *He gave them being.* He made all things for himself, yea even the wicked for the day of evil. If men have become alienated in their hearts, still God is their rightful Sovereign. His propriety in them is original and unalienable. If they have entered into the employ of the adversary, still God has given them no discharge from his service. His right to them as his creatures can admit of no question.

And it will not be denied that men, however offensive their character in the sight of God, are dependant on him as their *Preserver and Benefactor.* "In him we live, and move, and have our being." Said the Psalmist, "The eyes of all wait on thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." Thus wicked men are the *property* of God, and are *preserved* by him, two essential relationships between the master and his servants.

And he has occasionally *styled* them his servants. "I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the Lord, and Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, *my servant* and I will bring them

against this land." His *anointed*, and his *shepherd*, are terms which God applied to Cyrus. And he commissioned the prophet to say to Israel, "The sons of strangers shall build up thy wall, and their kings shall minister unto thee—For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish." Thus the world, from its crowned heads to its meanest vassals, are constituted the servants of the Church of God.

And *he assigns the ungodly their work*, as the master does the servant. The law of God, in all its minute detail, is the rule of duty to every ungodly man. And he has sometimes specified the service which he required of individual sinners, still withholding from them a knowledge of his purpose. Sennacherib must scourge the backsliding Church, Nebuchadnezzar carry them to Babylon, and Cyrus restore them, and rebuild their city and their temple. Nebuchadnezzar was sent to punish the iniquity of Tyre, and was then directed to take Egypt as a prey. Thus have the enemies of God been assigned sometimes a specific task, as the master decides in what field each servant of his shall toil.

And God sits in judgment upon the service which unregenerate men do for him. I refer now, not to the last judgment, but to decisions which God passes, and punishments which he inflicts in the present life. Nor yet do I refer to judgments, which God inflicts upon the wicked *generally*, but to those instances when he has terribly reprovèd them, for not doing to his mind the very work assigned them. I shall notice here but a single case—Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, was the Lord's sword to punish Israel, and all the nations bordering upon Israel. So eminently was he sustained as the Lord's servant, to scourge the nations, that destruction was threatened to every nation that did not submit to him. And still, in performing the very service for which he was thus made great, he so offended God as to render his overthrow as conspicuous as had been his pride, his insolence, and his oppressions.

I remark once more, in confirmation of the fact that wicked men are God's servants, that *he rewards them for their labors*. For the hard service which the king of Babylon performed against Tyre, in which every head was made bald, and every shoulder pealed, he was commissioned to go and take the spoil of Egypt as his reward. Indeed, so extensively was that man employed by the God of heaven, to scourge the enemies of Israel, and his own Church when they needed chastisement, that there went out in his behalf this wonderful edict: "I have given all these lands into the hands

of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and the beasts of the field have I given him also, to serve him; all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come."—"The nations that bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him, those will I let remain still in their own land, saith the Lord; and they shall till it and dwell therein." Even Israel was commanded, "Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him, and his people, and live." I will mention only one other case, out of scores that might be mentioned, where God rewarded a wicked man, for services done him. Jehu seems not to have been a man of God, but for the service he performed, in cutting off the house of Ahab, and destroying idolatry, his children, to the fourth generation, should sit upon the throne of Israel.

It is believed by many, that the promise contained in the fifth commandment, and all those which secure present prosperity to the liberal, are often fulfilled to ungodly men, who from wrong motives, have honored their parents, or been generous to the Church and people of God. Perhaps many a wealthy man in our land, who yet has no treasure laid up in heaven, has received his wealth of the Lord, in reward for deeds of kindness done his people, or exertions made to extend and bless his kingdom. With the measure they mete, it shall be measured to them again. If, without loving God, they will feed his children, and sustain his ministers, and spread his gospel, he will, without loving them, fill their barns with plenty, and cause their presses to burst out with new wine. It was perishable treasure that they loaned to him, in perishable materials he will reward them a thousand fold. But the wealth he bestows, since they gave him not their hearts, cannot be accounted a covenant blessing. It may be so abused in their hands, as to ripen them for an earlier destruction. May the mercy of a pardoning God prevent!

Thus do we argue, that wicked men are God's servants. He gave them being, is their preserver, and benefactor; has styled them his servants, has appointed them their work, sits in judgment upon the services they render him, and rewards them for their labors. I have not said they were servants in the same sense in which his people receive this appellation. Unhappily it is in a widely different sense. The one accomplishes his purposes with no such design, and is rewarded with the meat that perishes; the other receives the law at his mouth, does his will with design,

and has for his reward the meat that endureth to everlasting life. I proceed to the

2. Prominent suggestion of the text, *God employs wicked men to bless his people*. If God would say to his Church once, "For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish;" why has he not thus published to the world a permanent and established principle of his government? And if *nations* hold their being and their prosperity, on the condition that they subserve the interests of God's people, why do we not infer with assurance, that *individuals* are under the same law? Hence all the ungodly, and especially those who shall die in their sins, live to serve the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This subject is illustrated in the parable of the tares and the wheat; they must both grow together till the harvest. It is easy to see how grieved and injured would be many of the people of God, were not his enemies permitted to live. Remove the wicked husband, and the pious wife is a widow, poor, and dependant, and exposed to temptation and reproach; while her children, the seed of the covenant, are perhaps removed from her, must be uneducated, be reared without the means of grace, and in a world, cold, and inhospitable like this, might be constrained to beg their bread. Thus the promise of God would come to the ground.

In other cases, one who is not born of God may be, as it regards temporalities, the support of a Christian Church. His death might remove its faithful pastor, and the people perish for lack of vision. On the exertions of one wicked man may depend, in a variety of ways, the instruction of a vast number of the rising generation. God, then, will sustain him in life, and fill his storehouse with good things, and bless *him*, that he may bless others, and continue him down to the extremest old age.

It may happen that one who does not love God may be a valuable citizen or statesman. The pressure of government may be upon his shoulders, and a state or kingdom be greatly injured by his death, and ultimately the church suffer. Let both then grow together till the harvest. God has laid his plan, and will not abandon it, in which he has secured beyond the possibility of hazard, the best interests of his people.

We should have some difficulty in vindicating the ways of God, if the multitudes of the ungodly, especially those who at last perish, had no profitable employment in his world. A wise and good *man* would not make provision for the idle and the vagrant. He would be unwilling to foster inaction, or waste his property.

Hence it cannot be that the blessed God, who makes the wants of a disloyal world his care, has not the wisdom to find them employment in his house. Thus his known character gives us assurance, that he will not give breath and bread and raiment to beings for whom he has no service in his kingdom, and whose existence and agency in that case would but cumber and curse his creation.

Let us look at facts, and let them speak in behalf of God. They were doubtless ungodly men who built the ark in which Noah and all his were saved from the miseries of the deluge. Joseph's ungodly brethren raised him to that seat of honor and power which he filled in Egypt. The impious Pharaoh fed the Church of God during a long protracted famine. The blood-thirsty Haman elevated Mordecai in the court of Persia. The princes of Babylon procured Daniel his great advancement in that monarchy. So the Canaanites lived and prospered, till they had cultivated their land, and made it fertile and beautiful for the comfort of Israel. They built cities, and planted vineyards and olive yards, and Israel eat the fruit of their labors. Cyrus sent back the Jewish captives to their land, and Darius contributed from his own purse to build the house of God, and supply the daily sacrifice. Judas marked out the Lamb, and the impious Sanhedrim, and the Roman soldiery put forth the decree, and built the altar, and slew the sacrifice, that atoned for sins, and procured the redemption of a world. The proud Cæsar reduced the world to one empire, that the way might be prepared to promulgate the glorious gospel of the blessed God. Columbus suffered every thing but death, that he might search out a place for the pilgrims, just at the juncture when they must flee or suffer.

I know that the wicked have sometimes persecuted the people of God even unto death. But this is still the same service, as faith views it. When believers are matured for heaven, their death is precious in the eyes of the Lord. While men have forged their chains, and built their dungeons, and lighted their fagots, they have performed a service as necessary to the accomplishment of the grand plan of redeeming mercy, as when they have housed, and fed, and cherished, and comforted them.

Yes, from the time of Cain till this very day, wicked men have served and blessed the Church of God. And the increase and the joy of his kingdom admits now a foreign agency, as readily as when Jerusalem was rebuilt, and the second temple set up. Men pursue their own inclinations, and do what they please, while God directs all their energies into the same channel, and renders them

subservient to the interests of that blessed kingdom which he has established in this world. Not a muscle, a nerve, a passion, or a thought exists for any other purpose ; or worm or sparrow perishes but with this design.

Many a foe of Zion, many who finally will have no interest in a Savior's love, are employed in accumulating wealth, clearing forests, cultivating farms, and building habitations to accommodate the friends of God, in that day when the knowledge of him shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Hence we read, "the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just." And we read again, "Though the sinner may heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay ; he may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver.

Every storm that blows has its commission to bless the Church, and every passion that raves has the same charge. The revolutions that have been so frequent in our day, so disastrous to kingdoms, ruinous to individual fortune, and torturing to the heart of sensibility, though managed, as they evidently have been, almost exclusively by ungodly men, and usually with the basest design, have helped to prepare the way for the heralds of salvation to carry glad tidings of great joy to all people.

That scourge of nations, and contemner of human life and human happiness, who lately died in solitude on one of the isles of the sea, though long the curse of Europe, and remembered with horrid interest by the millions whom his ambition bereaved, and immortalized by the rivers of blood that every where flowed at his feet, still wrought for the Church of God. He gave popery a deadly wound, crushed the inquisition, avenged no doubt much of the blood of the martyrs, and though himself a tyrant, was the means of enkindling a spirit of freedom, which will, not long first, result in the downfall of every despot in Europe, and through the world.

The tract system, that mighty engine by which God is now promulgating the honors of his name, was the invention of infidelity, and was first used in corrupting the world with error.

The wise and discerning can see evidence in the events of every day, that wicked men are employed in serving God's people. When their treatment is unkind, it renders believers humble, watchful, prayerful, and heavenly-minded. Thus the promise, "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake ;" and another promise more ample yet, "All things are yours ; whether

Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." We do not say that Christians could not be sanctified in a world where they should be treated only with kindness; but we apprehend that in such a world they would ripen for heaven more slowly. They would be too well satisfied, and wish no other or better home.

Even the buffetings of the adversary have been made a blessing. Job was thus made a humbler and a better man. And Peter, when Satan had sifted him as wheat, was a more useful apostle. When John, in his vision, was questioned respecting some who appeared to be approaching heaven from this world, "Who are these arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?" the question being referred, was answered, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The idea distinctly conveyed is, that tribulation made them illustrious spirits. And we have all noticed in our walk through life, instances of believers, who evidently were making great advances in the divine life, in the most adverse circumstances that can be well conceived of. When they have not dared to pray, nor attend a place of worship, nor enter into covenant with God, it has seemed as if every lash of adversity pressed them on toward their home in the heavens. We have admired the straight-forwardness of their course, when they have wet every foot of their way with tears.

Thus since the revolt in heaven, and the fall in paradise, devils, and those whom they have led captive at their will, have had employment in the service of God's people. Directly and intentionally, or otherwise, they have served the people of the saints of the most high God, and will continue in the service, while the earth shall remain, and there shall be on it a believer ripening for heaven. And God is so sovereign in managing the affairs of his people, that he asks not the consent of the ungodly to be thus employed. They pursue their own plan, and he his; but whether they love or hate, are kind or hostile, their highest love, and their bitterest rebukes, achieve for the people of God the same object, and push them on toward their house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

3. *They mean not so.* It is very far from being the intention of wicked men to serve the people of God. So much may be asserted on the authority of facts, and what is more yet, on the authority of God. Sinners have one purpose which they intend to accom-

plish in every enterprise of theirs, and God another in the decree that assigned them that service. "Ye intended evil against me," said the injured Joseph, "but the Lord meant it for good, to save much people alive." Haman intended the ruin of Mordecai, but God purposed his high exaltation. The princes of Babylon meant the ruin of Daniel, but God would advance him to the highest renown. The infidels of France, while they spilt the blood of the priests, and confiscated their funds, purposed the overthrow of religion, but God meant a deadly blow at Antichrist. Voltaire contrived the tract system, to proscribe the Scriptures, but God designed the dissemination of the gospel truth. And when the wicked intention is *less* or *more* manifest, still the case does not widely differ.

It does not as we conceive prejudice at all the position we maintain, to allow, that there are individuals among the ungodly, who wish well to those who love God, and are daily employed in doing them kindnesses. The questions to be asked in that case are, do they esteem God's people any the more because of their piety, or less? or do good to them the more cordially, or the less so, because they love God? Is the zeal to do them favors *increased* or *diminished* because they are partially sanctified? Men may continue kind to them notwithstanding their religion, and still be the farthest possible from intending to bless them as the friends of God. The most selfish motives may induce them to act: as the Christian may be the wife, or the husband, or the brother, or the child, of the unregenerate benefactor, and the instinctive affections do all we see done. And even then it is doubtful, whether there is ever a wish in the unrenewed to do them spiritual good, to advance them on toward heaven. I know of no authority, either from Scripture or fact, to warrant the supposition, that any believer ever had an unregenerate friend, who wished him to progress in putting on the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. What! wish a wider and still wider separation, and finally an eternal remove from them we love! urge them to depart from us, be more unlike us, and have less fellowship with us? and this because we love them! There would be something strange in all this.

Nor will it be any argument against the position, *they mean not so*, that men are not conscious of this operation of their hearts. The same heart that is desperately wicked, is deceitful above all things. Very few are conscious of hating the character of God, or his law, or his government. You may go to the careless, stupid, prayerless multitude, and only one in a thousand will confess

that he hates God, and he rather because of his orthodox education, than his consciousness, and the residue will most of them be angry, that you should presume to charge them with a crime so monstrous. You may accuse them in the very language that God uses, of having evil hearts of unbelief, of being carnally minded, or of being dead in trespasses and sins, and if you make them understand that all this implies, that they do not love their Maker, and his people, they will resist the imputation in the very face of this inspired testimony. If no charge may be brought against the unregenerate, but such as they are ordinarily conscious is true, we must either find them in a state of conviction, or may press home upon them no guilt of any shape or hue.

If then the doctrine may stand, it is but what every believer in divine revelation expects, that God will employ his power, to convert to the use of his people, what is or is not done with this view. He would not leave them in a world where, our doctrine true, there are so few to design their good, without some sure promise that he will defend them, and will by all events, promote their present sanctification, and their ultimate blessedness. Hence the broad fields of promise. "The wrath of man shall praise thee." "He made a pit and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealings come down upon his own pate." What a keenness is there in that divine challenge in the second Psalm; "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." The address of God to the tempter soon after the fall, contains the very sentiment we enforce, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed." And said our Lord to his disciples, "I came not to send peace but sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." From language like this, with which the Bible is filled, we should seem to be justified in supporting the position, *they mean not so*. It is not the design of unregenerate men to bless, directly or indirectly, the people of God. I proceed to say,

4. While God employs wicked men in serving his people, *he holds them under close restraint*. Look at the fulfilment of the pre-

diction of the text in the eighteenth and nineteenth chapters of the second book of Kings. That prince *was sent* as predicted in the text, and his generals with a great army encamped under the walls of Jerusalem. There Rabshakeh, in the name of his master, insulted God, practised perfidy with the king of Israel, abused and ridiculed the people, and pretended to have a commission from God to destroy Jerusalem. Hezekiah committed the matter to the Lord, and in sackcloth appealed to him to defend his own great name, and save his people. And God, by his prophet, sent him an answer of peace. Said Jehovah of the proud monarch, who had come to wage war with his honor, "I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me." It was a moment of awful interest. Just without the gates of the city was a victorious army, of nearly two hundred thousand men. *Now* it was that faith only could penetrate the dark cloud, that hung over the city and sanctuary of God.

But God had chained that impudent blasphemer to the foot of his throne, and he had now gone to the extent of his limits. When men, in abusing God's people, have enough of the fiend about them, to go on and insult God himself, then his people are safe, for the Divine honor must be vindicated, and God will do that himself, most promptly. I should be afraid of no man who would curse me, *and my Maker too*. I have then only to stand still, and see the salvation of God.

That proud man was in the hand of a mighty Conqueror, and here was Israel's safety. "I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way which thou camest." That night the angel of the Lord entered the Assyrian camp, and slew a hundred four-score and five thousand. When Sennacherib awoke, and saw his whole army dead corpses, he returned to his own land, and went to worship in the temple of Nisroch, his god, where two of his own sons imbued their hands in his blood. When men have blasphemed God, he can easily overtake them, and slay them. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." That impious man perished in the very temple of the god he worshipped, that Jehovah might doubly avenge the insults that had been offered him, on the idols to whom he had been compared, and the wretch who had defied his power. Thus God, while he had that blasphemer in his employ, was careful to hold him under close restraint.

We infer the same doctrine from the history of Balaam. He would have cursed Israel, because he loved the wages of unright-

eousness. And he persevered in the design, while conscience, and the dumb ass speaking, reprov'd his madness. But God loved his people, and although Balaam's success could not have hurt them, still he would not allow his impious maledictions to contaminate the atmosphere that breathed through the camp of Israel. After all his pompous efforts, he pronounced a blessing only, and the curse lighted upon his own head. He perished by the sword, and went to his own place. *He* intended one thing, and *God* another, and he failed because God kept a bridle upon his lips.

So Haman was hanged upon the gallows he had erected for Mordecai, and the foes of Daniel were food for the beasts of prey that would not devour *him*. In the bloody scenes of Bethlehem, the very child escaped whom Herod would have slain, and the curse of God fell on *him*. If time permitted, I could swell this catalogue of facts, indefinitely, all going to show, how *terrible*, as well as *sure*, are God's restraints.

But his restraints are sometimes *merciful*. Saul of Tarsus is a happy case. He set out with the fury of a beast of prey, and dragged to prison and to death all that loved the Lord Jesus. At length he must needs go to Damascus, and try his zeal upon the lambs of the flock in that region. But he had now finished his career of blood, and the grace of God arrested him. It would not longer comport with the Divine purpose to permit the prowling wolf to range among the sheep-folds.

And we could give you, had we time, more recent facts, of both descriptions, where *judgment* and where *mercy* produced restraint. Ask the ministers of the gospel, who notice and record such facts, and they will tell you of many a man, who raved against God and his truth, like a mad bull in a net, up to the time when God subdued him by his grace. Or they will turn over the darker page, and tell you of the *sweeps of death*, among the enemies of the gospel, till all your blood would chill. In some fearful instances, a whole gang of gospel opposers, infidel, and hardened, and desperate in character, have perished, in such rapid succession, as not to leave a doubt behind, *whether* God did it? or *why* he did it? Men have found a grave *on the very day* when some impious vow against God or his people was to have been executed, and have roared upon their beds, when they have learned, too late, that their sins had found them out. We might not *say* at their funeral, that they had gone to their own place, but verily we *thought so*, and trembled. We have seen them stripped of their property and their influence, at the moment when it was too evident to doubt

that the interests of the Church required that they should be brought low.

But whether the divine restraints are *merciful* or *vindictive*, they are *sure*. Wicked men are governed by the same voice that controls the waves of the sea. "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." Till covenant love consent, the children of God cannot be hurt in their person, their interest, or their character, by the ungodly. A plan to injure them may be all ripe for execution, and is still as perfectly under the Divine control as at any previous moment. Men may gnash their teeth, under the agonies of painful disappointment, and curse the hand that restrains them, but God will not be moved from his purpose, nor abandon one of his little ones, if he must destroy a world to protect him.

5. When their work is done, as God intended it should be, *he will punish them, for not doing his pleasure from right motives*. This doctrine is exhibited with the greatest distinctness in the history of Sennacherib. When the Lord had performed his whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, he would punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. So it was threatened Babylon that she should be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. And all the other nations which were the rod of God's anger to Israel, and accomplished his decrees, perished for injuring the Church. So the nations that slew the martyrs, although they fulfilled the purpose of God, are yet to suffer, and perhaps perish, for that sin.

And all the finally impenitent will go on accomplishing the decrees of God, with a heart that meaneth not so, and when their work is done must perish because all their motives were wrong. Devils are doing the same thing, accomplishing God's design without intending it. And now the question is, How is God to be vindicated in this procedure? We have facts in the case still, by which this question can be settled.

First, "he meaneth not so." There was no design in that proud monarch to do the divine pleasure; else surely he would not have so blasphemed the God he would serve. It never enters into the heart of the ungodly to do, what ultimately they will accomplish. And it is a maxim with men, and why not with God, that we deserve neither credit nor reward, for the good we do without intention. Suppose there operate no very *evil* design in an act that works our good, if there be the absence of a design to do us a kindness, we feel under no obligation for the good that is done.

In a dark and cold night, you call for hospitality at the door of some stranger, but you are denied lodgings, and come home, and find your house on fire, and extinguish the flames, and save your house, and your family. Do you thank that man, for the kindness which his inhumanity did you? Does he, on hearing of the event, feel that you are obligated to him? Or does he have but the deeper sense of his own baseness? It is then a plain case, that God can give his creatures no credit, if they serve him without intention.

2. A fact in the case must be noticed; "It is in his heart to destroy and cut of nations not a few." Not only was there in the heart of the Assyrian, no good motive, but there was a motive positively bad; and still he did the pleasure of God. Hence, why should he not be punished? And why should not all ungodly men be punished, though it shall at last appear, that they have accomplished the divine purposes? "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." One gives you poison intending to kill you, but you have some obstinate disease upon you, and the poison cures you; is he the less a murderer? Was Mordecai indebted to Haman for his advancement, or Daniel to the princes of Babylon, or Joseph to his brethren?

Will it be denied that all unregenerate men act from wrong motives? Then assuredly their motives are neither positively good nor bad. But a moral agent cannot be wholly indifferent with regard to God and his law. There is no such being among all the creatures of God. Our motives in every action that may be considered *moral*, must be positively bad or positively good. Hence if you acknowledge that unrenewed men do not act from good motives, and this must be true or they are Christians, then they act from bad motives. "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil."

Thus every unregenerate man is thrown upon the very ground, where stood the proud and impious Assyrian. Not that every man is accustomed to sin with that boldness, or has so thrown off restraint, as he had; but there is in his heart, while God is rendering him serviceable to his people, the absence of a good motive, and the presence of a motive positively bad. And if we allow this, we justify God in his dealings with the Assyrian, and thus approve of the principle on which the last judgment will proceed. I close with

REMARKS.

1. *The sovereignty of God, and the agency and accountability of the sinner, are associate truths.* In the passage we have contemplated,

God makes a very bad man do his pleasure, and still pronounces him free, accountable and punishable, in these very deeds. Hence sovereignty, agency, and accountability, centre in the very same act; and if compatible once, then are they kindred truths for ever; and what God has thus joined, let no man put asunder. If Sennacherib could do what God intended he should, and yet act freely, and deserve punishment, another sinner *may*, and every sinner *does*. I will give you one parallel text: I could give you many. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." What, did God determine the deed, and still their hands wicked who did it? Just so; or the mind of God has been very unhappily expressed.

Do sinners still ask, "Why doth he yet find fault?" We answer, not because sinners do not accomplish his purpose. He never thought of bringing a complaint against them on this ground. He will take care that his purposes be accomplished. But he has still this charge against them *that they mean not so*. To please God, men must not merely do what he purposes they shall, but do it with an intention to serve and honor him. He has a right to the allegiance of the heart. The meanest parent demands this, and thinks his child disobedient until he serves him with design.

2. *How wrong is that notion, that if the matter of an action be correct, it is of no importance what is the motive.* In the scrap of sacred history that we have contemplated, the whole result, as bearing upon the agent, turns on the motive. The Assyrian corrected the Lord's people, this was well; but he meant not so, and this was the source of his ruin. His motive was, butchery, spoil, and dominion; this brought the curse of God upon him. He might have corrected the Lord's people, as he did; and accomplished his purpose, as he did; and been now in heaven, if only he had *meant so*.

Thus is established a general principle of the divine government; the *motive* is the *whole* that God will notice. If men will be careful on this *one point*, God will provide for the residue. They need have no fears that his decrees will not be done, and that exactly as he determined; but the motives with which they are done, will decide the destiny of every agent employed, from the beginning of the creation to the last day.

3. *God did not create intelligent beings merely that he might destroy them.* His ministers have been represented, as making this assertion; or advancing sentiments that must lead to this result.

Now the sovereignty of God, as taught in this discourse, leads to a directly opposite result. Here we see him employing men, of the very worst character, in doing good; makes them correct his people, and feed them, and clothe them, and sanctify them, and bless them. And if God can oblige bad men, who do not love him, to do him a service like this, and still leave them free, and permit them to be as happy as they can be, and will at last merely demand of them that their motives were good, none but devils, and men desperately hardened, will complain.

They all have liberty to attach themselves to his family, and be his people, and be served, and be happy. But if they will not quit their sins, will not love the Savior, and will not serve voluntarily, so good a Master, they must either do nothing, that shall turn to any good account, or God must employ his wisdom and his power to turn all they do into a blessing to his people; and is this a hardship? For my life I cannot see, that in all this God does the impenitent any wrong. Or would it make them happy to know, that on their way to perdition, they had done mischief that God himself could not repair!!

I should think from what I know of God, that he *would do just so*. It is spoken very much to the praise of Cromwell, that he could employ to advantage the vilest man in England. And it seems to me that every good man must be glad, as every angel is, that God has this power, and this wisdom. "And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever."

If any would prefer not to serve as the ungodly do, while they *mean not so*, but prefer to do the voluntary service of a child, they may, and this is the very thing we wish and what God wishes. You need not build a Jerusalem, in which you are not to dwell, or a temple in which you are not to worship, unless you prefer the condition of a slave, to that of a son or daughter. You have but to come in at the invitation of the Gospel, and you may in an hour belong to the family of Christ.

God lets you do what you please. And if he turns your mischief into good, this cannot hurt you. Serve him willingly, and he will reward you, and love you. O, can there be a fairer offer? can there be a kinder God than this? I should think devils would be ashamed to complain of this doctrine. I know it exalts God, but I cannot see, if the life of my soul depended on it, what there is hard, or cruel, or oppressive, or discouraging, in the divine sovereignty. If men choose to say, that God is not sincere in offering them mercy, and that he always meant to destroy them,

after making them hewers of wood and drawers of water in the camp of Israel, and that they have only to *serve* and then *perish* ;— if they will give divine truth this construction, and thus pervert it to their own ruin, we have only to leave them in the hands of a sovereign God, and rejoice that he is not the Jehovah they suppose him to be.

Finally, this subject must afford comfort to God's people. Here they see all their interests identified with the prosperity of God's kingdom, and he determined to make that kingdom happy, and employing for this purpose all beings and all events. If their enemies would hurt them, he puts his hook in their nose, and his bridle in their lips. He bids them "fear not," and has pledged his word, that all things shall work together for their good. He will guide them with his counsel, and afterward receive them to glory.

Ye happy believers, my soul casts in her lot with you. The God we serve is a gracious, and a mighty God. He rolls along the spheres, guides the events of every hour, manages the wrath of man, and the rage of devils, controls every storm, and directs the course of every atom. He is known in the palaces of Zion for a refuge, and his name is a strong tower into which you may run and be safe, whenever alarm comes over you.

It was in the confidence which this very doctrine inspires, that the Psalmist could say, "Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear." A people so shielded, so served, and so beloved, can want only a song, equal to the gratitude they owe their Lord. They may keep at their Master's work, high in the confidence that he will never leave them, never forsake them. Amen.

SERMON XLIII.

WRATH CONQUERED BY LOVE.

ROMANS XII. 21.

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

A VERY good man once said, "If there is any one particular temper I desire more than another, it is the grace of meekness; quietly to bear ill treatment, to forget and forgive; and at the same time that I am sensible I am injured, not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good." But this sentiment, be it remembered, could be learned only from heaven. It did not belong to the systems of heathen philosophy. In them it was taught, that to forgive, till revenge had been taken, was weakness. To swear undying wrath, and plot the most summary redress, and sleep not till the enterprise was accomplished, all this was the height of virtue. And above this it is not to be expected that unsanctified human nature will rise. Hence every unchristian land is a field of blood. "The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty."

At the dawn of the age of mercy, a Pliny said, but had learned the sentiment from that very religion he affected to despise, "I esteem him the best good man, who forgives others, as though he were every day faulty himself; and who at the same time abstains from faults, as if he pardoned no one." But it was one from heaven, who had long enjoyed the harmony of happy spirits, and had himself the power to mould the hearts of men into his own image; who came down in all the amiableness of God, and taught the world principles of kindness; that to forgive is possible, and that the meek are blessed. His conduct accorded with his principles. When smitten on the one cheek he turned the other. When led as a lamb to the slaughter, he opened not his mouth, and when nailed to the tree, he merely prayed for those who drove the nails, and plead in their behalf that they knew not what they did. When he quit the world, he made it one of his last acts, to engrave upon

the hearts of his followers, as with the point of a diamond upon a rock, the very next text I have read you. Its spirit has constituted ever since, and will while the earth is blessed with a trace of his religion, the leading and prominent *social* virtue of his people. It is that feature of their Master which if they do not wear, they cannot *now* be recognized, nor can be known when they come to heaven.

Suffer me to make three inquiries, When may it be considered that one is overcome of evil? How may we save ourselves from the shame and the injury of being thus vanquished? and, How may we overcome evil with good?

I. *When may it be considered that one is overcome of evil?* This is a calamity that may doubtless happen to the *good man*, but is a matter of every day's occurrence to the multitudes of the ungodly. I remark, then, that a man is overcome of evil,

1. *When ill treatment excites the angry passions, and produces harsh and ill natured language.* In this snare unsanctified men are caught daily. Even men of correct habits are sometimes surprised by sudden and unexpected abuse, and rage when they should reason. But in every such case much is lost, and nothing gained. To lose our recollection and temper, and thus be brought down to a level with the man, whom we should rather have held in dignified and Christian contempt, is to be in a very uncomfortable sense overcome or conquered. This unhappy result was perhaps the very design of the onset. The foe has gained his whole object, and his antagonist is vanquished.

2. One is still more completely overcome of evil, *when he settles down into confirmed hatred of the offender.* He gives place to the devil, and lets the sun go down upon his wrath. By suffering anger to rest in his bosom, he becomes in God's esteem a fool. His passions have the mastery over him, and he becomes and remains a conquered man. And as he pores again and again over the insult that at first unmanned him, and thus deepens the tone of his anger, he may be seen in a figure putting chains upon himself, and rivetting the very fetters that bind him. Hardly may he be said to wish an escape from his bondage, or to make the least effort to break the chain that holds him. And not the miseries of an Algerine bondage, could more jade the spirits or vex the heart. It may be, too, that the foe was one whom in his calmer moments he would disdain to set with the dogs of his flock. Yet he has done the very deed he intended to do, and glories in his victory.

How unhappy, that one should be thus rendered a captive and a slave, by suffering his passions to rise upon him, and bind him.

3. One is overcome of evil *when he indulges designs of revenge.* The Divine injunction is, that we return good for evil, that we love them that hate us, and pray for them that despitefully use us. If the enemy hunger we are to feed him, if he thirst we are to give him drink, and thus heap coals of fire on his head. By no other means can we so readily conquer our foes. We use in this case a weapon whose thrust they can neither parry nor endure, under which they melt and perish.

But when we take the opposite course, and return evil for evil, we grant the foe a victory. We suffer ourselves to be driven from the delightful duty of doing good to all men, the only post where we can be happy. The foe who invades our land, and drives us from our farm and our home, has not gained a point, to him more dear, or to us more disastrous; for not the family and the fireside yield us better comforts than the habit of doing good as we have opportunity. No wealth will buy a luxury like it. Money will purchase food, and raiment, and ease, and influence. But the habit of blessing others with kindnesses, of making glad every heart about us, this is angel's food. The recollection of good done, can make calm the surges of adversity, and render light the gloomiest evening. It has produced a smile upon the brow of death.

It is when nothing can hinder us from doing good, that we are like God. He sends rain upon the just and upon the unjust. Now who will deny, that when injuries prevent us from acting like God, we are overcome of evil. We cease then, for the time being, to have any right to say, that we are the children of our Father in heaven, who causeth his sun to rise on the evil and on the good. And what result more painful, and more degrading, could any foe desire, than thus to dislodge us from all the comforts and privileges of adoption.

4. We are overcome of evil, *when the ill treatment of one, leads us to suspect the friendship of others.* If to some extent it should be the fact, that suffering one instance of abuse, should draw upon us the necessity of suffering other abuses, and the treachery of one friend make others treacherous; still this is far oftener true in imagination than in reality. In the gloomy moments of suffering injury, we are often induced to believe a lie. An *individual* may treat us rudely and unkindly, and he may be the only one in the whole circle of our acquaintance, who would be willing

to injure us. The contrary apprehension is begotten by the gloominess of the mind. And we are sometimes so ungenerous as to believe ourselves abandoned by a whole list of friends, because one has proved treacherous. Thus we are plunged into distress, are ready to say that all men are liars, and by our groundless suspicion, and consequent coldness and distrust, produce the very miseries we forebode. Our apprehensions are the very demons that break the tie of friendship, and dissolve the bonds of brotherhood. They beget distance, caution, jealousy, and neglect, and the result is abandonment and hatred. Thus in an evil hour we draw upon ourselves the very miseries we might avoid, and the foe is suffered to inflict a wound deeper and deadlier than he had hoped to. The bonds of friendship are sundered, the peace of the mind is destroyed, the interests of Zion are injured, and the foe sits and smiles in his ambush at the miseries we inflict upon ourselves. We are overcome of evil.

5. We are more yet completely overcome of evil, *when abuse begets habitual sourness of temper*. When God does not prevent by his grace, long protracted injuries, inflicted by insidious foes, are prone to produce this unhappy result. The spirits are jaded by adversity, and become expert in transferring odium from one person or thing to another, till very soon it can be expanded over the whole creation of God. There is begotten an acid temper, and the very landscape is robed in gloom. The irritated master wreaks his vengeance upon the unoffending slave. The innocent child dreads the return of his ill natured father, and the very wife turns pale, when some foe has kindled anger in the bosom of her husband. The indulgence of one unkind affection, like some leprosy, infuses its poison through the whole soul. The eye it looks through becomes a contaminated medium, and transfers its own disease to every object of its vision. The man had a friendly heart, but he becomes a misanthrope; he did enjoy society, but would now be content with a hermitage; he prized Christian fellowship, but he doubts now whether piety itself can make an honest man. How evidently is such a man overcome of evil.

6. One is overcome of evil, *when he attempts unnecessarily a public vindication of his character*. I say *unnecessarily*, for it cannot be denied that a good man, without his wish, may be forced into such a measure. Often is this the very object which some malicious foe would accomplish. He knows perhaps, what is too true, that the best character will suffer by handling, and when he cannot catch the good man in crime, will compass his wishes if he can so

fix imputation, as to force him to go into a proof of his innocence. Conscious that he cannot himself establish the *positive*, he would put the virtue he hates upon proving the *negative*, or of perishing.

He issues his libel, invents circumstances that shall favor it, employs all the truth he can, in corroboration of his falsehood, and where truth fails to fill out the picture, he scruples not to employ a lie. He would try both your temper and your reputation. Screened from view, he would cast filth upon you, and amuse himself and others to see you wipe it off. He hopes there may be some spot indelible, or that you may sin in the act of establishing your innocence.

Now the snare is laid. But calmness, and reflection, and prayer, may easily be victorious. Good character cannot be hurt but by its owner. The tongue of slander may injure for a moment the stranger, but good conduct will invariably sustain good character. And it has come at length to be noted as a suspicious circumstance, when we court the aid of law and counsel to defend our reputation. It was a shrewd remark of Dr. Mather, "The malice of an ill tongue cast upon a good character, is like a mouthful of smoke blown upon a diamond, which at present may obscure its beauty, but is easily rubbed off and the gem restored to its pristine lustre." "Depraved as the world is," said a man of long experience, "let them have your character, and though they may handle it roughly, they will ultimately restore it whole as they found it." But let them see that their attacks enrage you, and put you off your guard, or place you in a quixotic attitude of arming yourself for a conflict with a shadow, and their object is accomplished, and you are overcome of evil.

II. *How may we save ourselves from the shame and injury of being thus vanquished?* It is possible, no doubt, to obey the injunction of the text, as well as any other in the whole list of precepts. There are exertions which if we make, with a proper sense of our dependence on God, will enable us in the most evil day to stand. Let us then, in the

1. Place, bear it strongly in mind, *That he who would designedly injure us, does himself a greater injury.* There is in nature, or rather in the divine purpose, a principle of prompt and powerful reaction. Let one attack your character, and sure as life he hurts his own. Let him spread an ill report, and that report will recoil upon his own reputation. He will be considered a slanderer. If one act will

not fix upon him this stigma, that very impunity will induce him to repeat the deed, till the character he deserves will adhere to him. Thus *he* suffers, and *not you*.

Or would he merely disturb your peace, let him but alone, and his own peace is injured more than yours. God can give you a peace, that nothing can disturb. If you must unjustly suffer, God can support you and comfort you, but this he will not do for the man who wrongs you. His, on reflection, will be the shame, and the guilt, and the remorse, of a deed which God will not justify. The wound he intended for you, will rankle in his own bosom.

Now if the man who intended to injure us, has wounded himself, then we should pity him, and pray for him, and not study a duplicate revenge. There opens upon us the delightful opportunity, to bind up his wounds, and pour in oil and wine, and we may have luxury to forget and forgive—a luxury which the whole herd of evil doers never tasted.

Or be it our temporal interest they would hurt, or our influence, there is but this one issue to all the operations of malevolence—the curse lights upon the perpetrators. Their violent dealings shall come down upon their own head. They are taken in their own snare.

2. *If we resist evil, we are invariably injured.* The foe is the more courageous, the more fierce and prompt the repulse he meets with. He exhibits now a prowess that he could never have summoned, had he coped with mere non-resistance. A slanderous report is repeated and magnified, because it has been wrathfully contradicted. The presumption is that when the mis-statement shall have varied its shape and attitude, it can be imposed upon the credulous as a new fact, that shall go to corroborate the old. And let resistance be kept up, and soon the insulated charge becomes a long catalogue of crimes, that go to establish each other, and render unquestionable the whole series of allegations. Now it is hoped that the world will say, such a host of imputations cannot want for some foundation in fact. The charge of intemperance corroborates that of fraud and falsehood. The testimony of two liars, when they substantially agree, and there has been no concert, may establish the truth.

Thus charges which are all false, and are multiplied by resistance, are made to prop each other, till there is begotten suspicion that never need have been. And the needless attempt at investigation fixes the impression, that character is crumbling, and that a still bolder push will be accompanied with complete success. Thus

by wrestling with the blast, we are liable to be discomfited, when had we lain down and been quiet, the storm would have beat upon us a little, and passed over, and we should have seen the sun again in all his brightness. The foe intended to render us unhappy, and he learns that he has, and hopes most cordially that another onset may undo us. But let him see that you remain unmoved, that his attack has not even discomposed you, that you are invulnerable as the rock, and he must be the veriest idiot if he draws another arrow from his quiver. Hence, said the poet,

“ Tempest will rive the *stiffest oak*,
Cedars with all their pride are broke,
 Beneath the fury of that stroke,
 Which never harms the *willows*.”

3. *It will calm us in an hour of onset, to feel that wicked men are God's sword.* From him we deserve all the evil that the most malicious foe can inflict. True, men are none the less free agents, and accountable, because they are the rod and the staff in the hand of the Lord. But it would argue a want of submission to parental restraint, should the child seem angry at the rod. It is our consolation to know that God holds our enemies in his hand, directs every wound they shall inflict, and has promised to restrain their wrath, when it will not praise him. He has put his hook in their nose, and his bridle in their lips, and will in due time, when he has sufficiently humbled his people, lead their enemies back by the way that they came.

Hence, when ungodly men would do us injury, it should rather awaken our pity *for* them, than our anger *against* them. We have a divine illustration exactly in point, and conscious ill desert should ever lead us to say with David, in reference to Shimei, “Let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him.” “Why doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?” If the men who injure us are to be the instruments of *our* sanctification, and then, unless the grace of God interpose, are to be the objects of *his* everlasting displeasure, be their designs never so base, how can we feel otherwise than pitiful and kind?

4. *It will be a timely and sweet reflection, for a period of abuse, that ill-treatment is among the all things that shall work together for our good.* Trials may come from a quarter unexpected, and from those who owe us the kindest treatment. We took sweet counsel with them, and went to the house of God in company. Be it even so, still faith assures us that their injuries will bless us, will sanc-

tify us, and help us on in our preparation for the enjoyment of God in his kingdom. This one question settled, and I will inflict no wound upon my adversary. He is doing me everlasting good, and though he mean not so, still I cannot injure him who is constrained to be my benefactor. I will forgive him before he asks forgiveness, and will exert myself to induce him to pass on to heaven with me. And if unsuccessful, still the promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," will bear my spirits up through the darkest and dreariest hour.

5. *It should ever be our reflection in the hour of attack, that to be like Christ, we must not resist evil.* "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." He passed meekly through torrents of abuse. It poured in upon him, wave after wave, but he stood, a rock. When they would catch him in his words, he spoke wisely and kindly. When they would stone him, he inquired for which of his kind deeds they did it. When that fiend of midnight betrayed him, after joining in the Pascal supper, and having long borne the badge of discipleship, how meekly he inquired, "Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" Now would we be followers of the Lord Jesus, the track is plain; we must not suffer ourselves to be overcome of evil.

Finally, there is the direct command of God. No precept can be more binding than the text. To indulge a vindictive spirit is an infringement upon the Divine prerogative. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." There is a day of retribution appointed, and one is constituted judge who cannot err. In the hour of conflict we have only to refer men to that day when every wrong will be rectified. And if our sufferings are prolonged, still the years of heaven will run on till they are all forgotten. A Christian is but a pardoned rebel, and may not avenge himself. And all others may well fear to be vindictive, lest wrath come upon them to the uttermost. With the same measure that we mete, it shall be measured to us again.

III. *How may we overcome evil with good?* To do this will require the sacrifice of bad passions. The unrenewed heart has a keen relish for revenge. Not the most delicious food pleases the palate better. But this malicious appetite the grace of God must subdue, ere the heaven-born principle in the text can be adopted: a sufficient reason why the heathen have never imbibed the spirit of meekness. Parents taught their children to retain anger. In-

stance the father of Annibal, whose dying injunction to his son was, that he should never forgive the Romans: this precept he must swear he would obey. And many children learn of their parents now the same lesson. They are apt to learn, and they often have precept and practice to teach them. "Cursed parents! Cursed children!"

But let the heart be once subdued by the grace of God, and the lesson of the text is easily learned. The doctrine is simply this. If one treats us unkindly, we must treat him well. If he defame, let us say the kindest things possible of him. If he hurt our interest, let us advance his. If he expose our faults, let us cover his. If he will not oblige us, we must do kindnesses to him. If he deals reproach, we must practice no retort. If he curse us we must pray for him; if he hunger we must feed him, and if he thirst give him drink. If he smite us on the one cheek, turn the other. In one word, when he has done his best to injure us, let us do our best to bless and comfort him.

It may be well, when possible, to do another good in the very article in which he has intended our hurt. This will be entering the list with him, and will bring our virtues into a close comparison with his iniquities; thus shall we heap coals of fire on his head, and he be not a rock, shall melt and subdue him. When we would overcome an enemy with kindness, we make his conscience our ally, and bring him to hate himself and respect us. Then his weapons recoil upon his own head, and his violent dealings come down upon his own pate. We conquer him by love.

But in every effort of this nature we must *feel kindly*. A counterfeit affection will not bear us through. The heart must be primarily consulted in every such act of Christian revenge. Else the hypocrisy will be evident, and the defeat certain. When Paul said to the high priest, who had commanded him to be unlawfully smitten, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall," he neither obeyed the injunction of the text, nor was in a proper state of mind to obey it. Not even piety will render it certain that we shall feel kindly under abuse. In the blessed Jesus we have the only example that never failed. He was proof against every attack. The only case in which he exhibited the appearance of anger, was when his Father's house was made a den of thieves; and then he was angry without sin. Let our temper be like his, and we shall find it easy to do right; and to be like him, we are infinitely obligated.

It may greatly help us, when we come in contact with unhal-

lowed passions, to reflect, that not certainly is the man our enemy, who may be tempted to treat us unkindly. When he has done us this one injury, if we bear it with a Christian temper, he may remain kindly disposed to us, may become a firm and steady friend: while our wrath and revenge may erect him into a subtle and dangerous enemy. He may have made his onset upon us in an hour of irritation, and may be in an hour, more ashamed of himself than we are of him.

Is the offender an ungodly man, there is a single thought that must prepare us to meet his rage with calmness. He has no treasure in the heavens. He is passing on to the blackness of darkness for ever. We shall see him when a few days have gone by, unless the grace of God prevent, covered with shame and confusion. His harvest will be passed and his summer ended, and he not saved. And can we be angry to-day with one who is to perish to-morrow? Can any sensation but pity control us, while we see a deluded man raving on the very threshold of perdition?

Or is the offender a Christian, then how it should shame us to become angry with him. Angry with a brother, a follower of the Lord Jesus! He could not intend me wrong; his judgment erred; he will ask forgiveness, before the sun goes down, of God and of me. The followers of the Lord Jesus bite and devour one another! "O, tell it not in Gath; publish it not in the streets of Askalon!" The Savior must not be so wounded in the house of his friends. Let me have, I will not say my *religion*, let me have my *reason* in exercise, and I will bear any thing from a child of God. For my right hand, I will not raise it against one who is heir with me to an inheritance in the skies, and is to help me adore the Lamb for ever. Joint heirs with Jesus Christ! what a binding influence has this thought upon Christian hearts.

REMARKS.

1. How highly should we value our Bibles which teach us this amiable lesson. But for this book, we had never learned how to *receive* an injury, or *forgive* one. It belongs not to human nature, untaught from heaven, to invent such a sentiment as the text. Our parents had been fierce and cruel, and they had taught *us* to be implacable, had not the Bible been the associate of our home. And how this one heavenly principle lessens the miseries of human life! How many the wrongs it obliterates, and how many of the social endearments it begets! Precious book, be thou the inmate of my bosom, till the spirit shall quit its house of clay!

2. This subject will teach us to pity the heathen. Their end-

less quarrels are because they have no Bible. They would let their children, their widows, their sick, and their aged *live*, if they had a Bible. They would forgive their enemies and be meek, and benevolent, and gracious, had they not been without the book that teaches these heavenly lessons. Send them a few of your Bibles, and they will soon beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, and those vast fields of blood will be transformed into the garden of the Lord. He will accompany his word with his Spirit.

3. How happy the period of the Millenium. The Bible will then have its legitimate influence, and there will prevail the very spirit inculcated in the text. In what noble figures does the prophet teach us this truth, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cocatrice-den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." You have often read this precious text. How happy the eyes that are not closed upon the scenes of life, till that sweet morning has come, and all these tumults, that keep this world a wilderness, have subsided! May some favored child of mine live to see that happy period.

4. Let us learn, brethren, whether that day approaches. It will not burst upon us in a moment. There will be a gradual increase of that spirit which the text inculcates; till every parent will teach it to his children, and every child will love to learn. From the family circle it will spread out over the whole land, and render it Immanuel's land, a mountain of holiness and a habitation of righteousness. Do we see an increase of this spirit? Do we feel it in our hearts? Does it go out to view in our daily deportment? Then the day approaches.

5. This subject will try our piety. Can we overcome evil with good? Does the tiger or the lamb, predominate in our social intercourse? When we receive abuse, with what temper do we act? To this test our religion must at last be brought, and by this and other similar tests, the question must be decided, whether we can be happy with angels, or must make our bed in the pit. Will God sanctify us by his Spirit, and fit us all to dwell in a peaceful happy world. Amen.

SERMON XLIV.

A BRAND PLUCKED FROM THE FIRE.

LUKE XXIII. 43.

To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.

THE scene of the crucifixion was, in many respects, the most awfully interesting that ever human eyes witnessed. Many things combined to create this interest: the time, the place, the motley mixture of character among both the persecuted and the persecutors, the miracles wrought, the worlds interested in the event, all conspired to render the moment like no other since the wheels of time began to move. Angels gazed, and devils, at the whole scene, and probably every world in being was interested.

And yet, in all this scene, it has seemed to me that the redemption of the dying thief was one of the most interesting circumstances. Here was seen all the grace of Jesus Christ, and with it the supremacy of his power. He proved himself the Alpha and the Omega, having the keys of hell and of death, since, in the act of dying, he could communicate to his fellow-sufferer immortal life, and snatch the prey from the teeth of the destroyer, and bear it up to heaven in triumph. The friends of God, in every age before and since then, have fixed their eye on that hour as the proudest and most precious section of time in all the revolving ages.

The spirit of prophecy, looking through the lapse of many hundred years, and dwelling with rapture on the character and conflict of the Redeemer, foretold that he should be numbered with the transgressors. Accordingly, two men of despicable character, who had been condemned to die for theft, were crucified with him, one on his right hand and the other on the left. It was doubtless the intention of his enemies, by this arrangement, to degrade the immaculate Son of God.

We are told that one of the malefactors which were hanged, railed on him, "If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? and we indeed justly,

for we receive the due reward of our deeds : but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

We are told by one of the other Evangelists, "that the *thieves* also which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth :'" implying, as it would seem, that the penitent thief, at the first, joined his companion in reproaching the Lord of glory. In pursuing the subject, my object will be to notice the evidence afforded us in the narrative, that ONE of the malefactors was saved. I shall then inquire, *Whether there are, probably, many instances of late conversion ?*

I. I am to notice the evidence afforded us in the narrative, that ONE of the dying malefactors was saved. The probability seems to be that he was nailed to the cross, a stupid unbeliever. If he joined his fellow in reproaching the Savior, there can remain no doubt that he was then in his sins. But between the sixth hour and the ninth, he was evidently made a new creature. Of this interesting fact we have evidence :

1. In the *faithfulness* with which he *reproved* his miserable associate. I know that the bare act of administering reproof is not of itself decisive testimony, one way or the other, of piety. We are always to notice the circumstances and the spirit with which the reproof is administered. It often happens that the basest of men, in a fit of passion, reprove their fellow-men. But the circumstances in which the dying malefactor reproved his fellow-sufferer, give his conduct in that matter peculiar weight. All about him were despising the Lord Jesus Christ as an impostor and a miscreant. The Redeemer was accused of many gross crimes, and probably the thief had not the means of knowing their accusations to be false. It would not have been surprising if he had viewed the Savior as the vilest of the three sufferers. With such impressions he would not have viewed the conduct of his fellow as very criminal. His reproof then, testifies, that he had other views of Christ than were entertained by the multitude who witnessed his agonies. And while he abhorred the conduct of his fellow, he boldly expressed that abhorrence, in contempt of the full tide of public opinion. If one should reprove the profane or lewd, while in the company of pious men, or at a time or place where and when religion was popular, it would be no very decisive testimony of his piety ; but let him administer reproof when all

about him would justify the sin, and despise the reprovcr ; then it becomes an auspicious testimony. Wicked men are strongly tempted to fall in with the current of public opinion. To do what will please and be what others will approve is very much the leading principle with unbelievers. When we see them face about, and stem the current of depravity, this conduct tells in their favor.

2. The believing malefactor *freely acknowledged his sins*, and the *justice of his execution*. "And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds." There may be confessions of guilt, where sin is not hated. And yet a free and ingenuous confession, where there is no temporal advantage to be gained, is evidence of that compunction which always attends repentance, "He that confesseth his sins shall find mercy."

3. The penitent thief *feared the Lord*. Said he to his companion, Dost thou not fear God? They had none but God to fear. Human justice had exerted upon them its utmost rigor. And yet the dying thief confessed, that there was wrath for them to fear. It is manifest that he believed in a future righteous retribution, and was acting with reference to that day, when he must give account of the deeds done in the body.

4. There was evidence of *meekness, humility, patience, and submission*. He rebelled not against the authority that crucified him, submitted to what he deserved, and seemed willing to suffer, without complaint. He felt and acknowledged that he was receiving "the due reward of his deeds;" that no injustice, but the contrary, was done him, while he was made a public example of justice. He took to himself the punishment of his sins, and submitted, without a murmur, to the rigorous operations of human law.

And with his submission there seems to have blended meekness, patience, and humility. In fact, these attributes of mind are very much the same, and have their distinct names because of the varied circumstances in which the same Christian grace is brought into exercise. When the suffering penitent cheerfully cleared the Savior of every fault, and charged crime, and guilt, and desert of punishment upon himself, he used the legitimate language of humility. He did what every sinner must do before he can be accepted of Christ, took to himself the punishment of his sins. He appeared to have received the death he deserved with meekness, and to have endured with patience the pangs that brought that death upon him.

5. The dying malefactor discovered *strong faith* in the Redeemer. He viewed the Lord Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah, believed

that though he saw him dying, he should live again, that he was the possessor of a kingdom, that he had power to bless and save him, and in the exercise of this confidence, committed his soul to the Redeemer's care; "Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Now it would be no other than a strong faith that could thus operate at such a moment. It was the hour, and the power, of darkness. The object of his faith was, at that moment, in a state of *debasement, shame, and contempt*. He was believed to be an impostor, was viewed as a malefactor, had been condemned as a criminal, and was suffering the penalty of human law. Such would have been the view of unbelief. His disciples had forsook him; one had betrayed him, and one denied him. If we except the conduct of the Savior upon his trial, and while hanging on the cross, and the wonders that transpired at the time, the earthquake and the darkness, there was every thing to tempt an unbeliever to view the suffering Savior with scorn and contempt. And there were doubtless those present who would explain those strange phenomena so as to lay the fears they might awaken. And we do not perceive that they had any effect upon the Jewish Sanhedrim, or the Roman soldiery.

It must, then, have been a strong faith which would lead the dying thief to commit his immortal interests to one who was thus in the very depth of disgrace, and one, with whose character he was, probably, but very little acquainted. He doubtless saw in the Redeemer, while hanging on the cross, a dignity of deportment, illustrative of his high and holy character. He heard him pray for the presence of his Father, and the forgiveness of his enemies, which might convince him that an august personage, one more than human, suffered by his side. Still that faith was strong which could surmount so many obstacles, and commit such amazing interests to one apparently so unable even to help himself.

6. There was, in favor of the penitence of the thief, the evidence of *prayer*. One would hardly suppose that he had *leisure* to pray, as he hung upon the torturing nails, and groaned with every breath, and bled in agony at every pore—there could be but little leisure either to think or pray. But in the midst of all this he prayed, "Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." There is a prayer, I know, that is not of faith, nor can any form of prayer be to those who cannot know the heart, decisive evidence of piety. It is a sure *negative evidence*, but not *positive*. If one *does not* pray, he is unquestionably an unbeliever. Still it is said of Saul, "Behold, he prayeth," and this fact was mentioned as an evidence of

his piety. And prayer is frequently thus spoken of in Scripture, and must be viewed in the dying malefactor, as evidence of piety.

Finally, however, our only assurance that the dying malefactor went to heaven is to be gathered from the declaration of our Lord, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." But for this assertion of the Redeemer, we could only have *hoped* that the miserable man was saved, and it would have remained till the judgment day a doubtful question, like the conversion of Nicodemus.

II. I proceed to inquire into the *probability of there being many late conversions*. By late conversions I mean, what you will understand me to mean, conversions which take place in the late hours of life. Although I shall dwell more particularly on the scenes of the sick and dying bed, yet many of my remarks will apply to the period of old age. I confess my unshaken belief that the instances are rare when a person reaches heaven after spending almost the whole of life in sin. In support of this opinion, I refer you, in the

1. Place, to the *Scriptures*. The whole aspect of the sacred volume exhibits this truth. Of the many thousands of whose conversion we read in the Scriptures, but one is said to have been converted in the dying hour, and but few are known to have been far advanced in life. From the very nature, however, of this article, I can make no quotations. If any doubt the truth of the remark, it will belong to them to bring forward, if they be able, Scripture testimony to the contrary.

The promises and invitations of the gospel imply that God's chosen time to make up his jewels is the early part of life. "Those that seek me early shall find me." "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

The same may be inferred from the *threatenings*. "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." If you will examine your Bibles, almost every page will teach you, in one form and another, that religion is to be the business of early life, and not of a dying hour.

2. That few are converted in the late hours of life is manifest from the *very nature of religion*. It is spoken of as a thing that commences, and by time grows and is matured in the heart. It is compared to leaven hid in the meal, which gradually operates till

the whole is leavened. Paul speaks of the Christian as "forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to those things that are before, pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And again, speaking of the family of believers, says, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." From these representations, and a thousand like them, it would seem that the believer is converted generally long before he dies, and has time to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth, till by degrees he becomes matured for the heavenly state. Converted late in life there would be no time for this gradual progress. The Christian's life could not then be a warfare—he would have no need of the whole armor of God. All the directions given to the Christian how to live, and how to feel, and how to speak so as to honor religion, would seem to be lost, if the great body of believers were not converted long before they die. Indeed, the very idea of a visible Church, makes it manifest that the great body of the redeemed will be enlisted early in the service of God, be members of his Church below, and in this world, by discipline, and instruction, and frequent communications of grace, become qualified for the rest and the glory of heaven.

3. The fact that a *preached gospel* is God's *instituted means* of salvation, goes to show that we are to expect but few conversions on the dying bed. For "the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God." "For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Speaking of the heathen, the same apostle says, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" The three thousand on the day of Pentecost were awakened under a preached gospel. And ever since then, this has been the grand means of the salvation of souls. But these means are scarcely applicable to the dying man. True, he may have heard the gospel before, and the truths he has heard may awaken him when on the dying bed; or the gospel may be preached by his bed-side, if infidel associates have not fenced the truth from his dying chamber. Still it is not to be expected that when one has neglected religion till the last days of his life, God will then

send him the gospel, and give it such efficacy as to change the heart, and if not, the hope of a death-bed repentance is small.

4. As far as we can know the purpose of God from Scripture or fact, it is his purpose to employ his people in this world as instruments of his glory, before he takes them to heaven. Inquire of the children of God the date of their conversion, and they will almost uniformly point you to some early period of life. Our revivals prevail principally among the youth. The psalmist says, "Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." God says, "They that honor me I will honor." Believers go from strength to strength, till every one of them appeareth in Zion before God. We fight for the crown, we wrestle for the prize, and strive for the victory. But all this is incompatible with a death-bed repentance, and renders it, I think, clearly improbable that there are many such instances.

5. Many circumstances conspire to render the exercises of the sick and dying bed *doubtful*. In that situation we are to expect from the very nature of the case, that one will be filled with alarm. He views himself on the verge of eternity. All he does must be done quickly. Conscious that the whole of life has been mispent, that he must soon die, and that there is no work, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, nor device in the grave, and that judgment will tread upon the heels of death, he becomes alarmed of course.

And if the paroxysms of disease do not prevent, he is very liable to become the subject of rational conviction. Shut up from the scenes of a busy world, he will naturally think on his case; and the more he thinks, the deeper will be his impression of his guilt and ruin. The truth he has heard he will now recollect. The invitations he has neglected, the admonitions he has slighted, the warnings and reproofs, will all return anew, and pour their congregated light upon his conscience. It is an honest hour, and the truth will be felt. Hence a state of alarm and conviction would seem to be a thing of course, if the ravages of disease leaves any leisure or strength for reflection.

And such a state of mind is very liable to be followed by calmness, hope, and joy. From the very constitution of our minds, and of some more than others, we are liable to vibrate from one extreme to the other, from a state of deep depression and despair, to a state of ecstatic joy. We have seen persons who, on the loss of some dear friend, seemed as if they should die, and yet, in a few days, would be even light and trifling. In times of awakening, some have seemed to be filled with the terrors of hell and in a

short time were more vain and trifling than ever. With a dying man who is conscious that he has lived without God and without Christ in the world, there is such an amazing interest at stake, that he will naturally grasp at a hope that he may be saved. When death stares us in the face, a hopeless state is intolerable. Hence the dying man will be constantly looking about him for evidence that he is a believer, and will be very liable to obtain a hope without evidence.

When hope is once acquired, many things will conspire to strengthen it. It may be succeeded by great joy. The idea that one is safe will naturally render him happy. And this false joy by re-action will strengthen his hope. Friends who are about the sick-bed, if pious or not pious, will be glad to see the sufferer happy, and will be tempted to do their utmost to strengthen and confirm his hope. And if pious, unless peculiarly faithful, they will be liable to aid his delusions, and strengthen his refuge of lies.

He thinks his passions subdued by the grace of God, when in fact they are only tamed by the paroxysms of disease. The appetites do not demand unlawful gratification, for they have for the present ceased their operation. The patient imagines that he has ceased to love the world, when in fact he is only beaten off from its embrace by the rage of disease. Because he is constrained to abandon the cares, the pleasures, and the vexations of life, and is led to think much on the subject of death and judgment, he presumes that he has become heavenly-minded.

As the words of the lips are little to be relied on, and are not spoken of in Scriptures as full evidence of piety, it is difficult to suppose that a dying man should be able to apply to his piety any very decisive tests. He cannot mingle with the ungodly and show us that he hates and reproveth their vile conduct. He cannot engage in trade or business, and so prove to us that he will not be hard and dishonest in his dealings. He cannot know the miseries of those around him, and show his benevolence by flying to their help. He cannot mingle with God's people in the sanctuary and the place of prayer and conference, and show us that he loves the people and worship of God. He is not exposed to temptation, and cannot prove to us that he has a religion that can overcome the world, and stand against the influx of iniquity.

In one word, a sick and dying man can bear but little of the fruits of holiness. He cannot give us the same evidence that a person in health can in the same time, which leads me to observe,

6. That the time is so *short* generally in which we can observe

the exercises of a sick and dying man, that whatever the case may be, our hopes cannot rise very high. If one in health, without any special event of providence to alarm him, become the subject of awakening conviction and hope, still we at first rejoice with trembling, and often many months elapse before we lose all our fears that he may return again to a state of stupidity. And our apprehensions must be greater still in the case of one whose exercises commenced while he stood on the verge of the grave.

7. The fact that so many have appeared well in the sick and dying chamber, while death was seen to hang over them, but have on their recovery lost their impressions, and appeared even worse than ever, has rendered suspected the exercises of the sick and dying bed. It is true that we have no authority to say that God may not do more for those who die than for those who recover. This matter we must leave with God till the last day. Very few persons have failed to witness one or more instances in which recovery to health has disappointed high hopes of piety. In some cases all doubt was gone, and if the patient had died, there had been the firmest confidence of meeting him in heaven; and still on his return to health, a few weeks made him careless, and the morning cloud and the early dew were dissipated. With very many facts like these before our eyes, how is it possible but that every prudent man should admit with caution the validity of those hopes of heaven, that are generated upon the death-bed. And now what use shall we make of all this? I

REMARK.

If death-bed repentances are so doubtful, then *delays* in matters of religion are imminently dangerous. To-morrow, perhaps, you betake yourself to the sick-bed, and it proves your death-bed. There is something said to you on the affairs of your soul, and it may be that you are serious, and finally begin to hope that you shall live in heaven. But that hope may prove a spider's web, and you may lean on it and perish. Your friends may think you gone to heaven, but they may find, when the last day has come, that you are on the left hand. Attend to religion now in health, and then when you die we shall have hope of you, and comfort in you. Now, if you want advice we can give it, but on the dying-bed, if we call on you, you will be too weak to receive instruction, and we can only pray for you, and perhaps let you perish.

SERMON XLV.

THE FATHER THE PROTOTYPE OF THE SON.

JOHN XIV. 8, 9.

Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?

THE doctrine which our Lord here intended to teach is evidently this, that in himself dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. It was impossible to know *him* and not know the *Father*, to *see* him and not *see* the Father. In him the divinity was embodied, and thus, in the only possible way, brought down to human view. He was God manifest in the flesh. In no other case was it possible that any man should see God.

In our ideas of the Supreme Being, if our views are correct, we conceive not of a being possessed of locality and visibility, but of attributes dwelling in one incomprehensible, and infinite mind, whose duration applies to every point of time, and whose presence to every portion of space. When we think of him, or pray to him, we conceive of a junction of every great and amiable attribute. We worship a cluster of perfections which, as to the mode of their existence, lays the foundation for the distinction of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It will be my object to show that these perfections, which, when associated, constitute the object of our worship, were all found in the Savior, were attached to the man Christ Jesus, and prove him to be truly divine. If in him some of these attributes are less conspicuous than others, it is because his connection with human nature, and the point of time at which we view him, rendered it difficult, if not impossible, that such attributes should be developed. Every perfection which it was possible that he should exhibit clearly, was exhibited, and all others which enter into our ideas of God, are said to belong to him, and are inferrible from what he did. The truth at which I aim is this; If we find in Christ Jesus every attribute of Jehovah, and if these attributes appear not to be borrowed but to belong to him as originally his own, it is our duty to own his divinity, and worship him as our Lord and our God. I notice how freely the Scriptures ascribe to the Savior these attributes.

For instance *Omniscience*. The most superficial observer of the history of the Lord Jesus Christ cannot fail to have noticed how perfectly naked and open to his inspection were all creatures and all things. Peter came to him to inquire respecting their obligations to pay tribute. Our Lord, it is said, prevented him, i. e. he knew his errand and anticipated his request. He sent him to the sea, and directed him to angle for a fish which had swallowed a piece of money, and would be at the shore ready to be taken when Peter should cast in his hook. Here was displayed in one act intuitive knowledge of the natural and moral world, such as can belong to none but God.

When, in fulfilment of an ancient prophecy, he would enter Jerusalem amid the hosannas of the multitude, he sent two of his disciples to bring an ass which they would find tied in a certain place, and whose owner was friendly to their Lord, and would readily send his beast to do him honor. Here was exhibited an omniscience which can belong to none but God.

So while Nathaniel was under the fig-tree he saw him. He knew of the sickness and death of Lazarus, although he was at a distance, and had received no intelligence of these events through any human communication. When he would eat the passover, he knew that a man friendly to his religion would go for a pitcher of water, and would meet the disciples whom he had sent to prepare for the feast, and offer them for this purpose an apartment of his house. He knew the hearts of all about him; that the scribes and pharisees had come to catch him in his words; that the disciples were contending for superiority, and that Judas had it in his heart to betray him.

Omnipresence, as distinguished from omniscience, was an attribute which could not be displayed in connection with humanity without bringing the latter into doubt. If at the same moment that he was teaching the multitude on Mount Olivet, he had also been known to be in the same employment by the sea of Galilee, his cotemporaries would have doubted whether he had a human as well as a divine nature, or would have believed that there were more than one Messiah; and either of these errors would have been dangerous. Hence we are not to expect to see in the history of his life any evidence of this attribute, but must learn that he possessed it from what he says of himself, or from what inspired writers say of him.

His *Almighty Power* is conspicuous in every part of his history. The waves of the sea were calm at his word; he created bread to

feed the multitude; every disease yielded to his touch; devils were dispossessed at his bidding; and the lame, the deaf, the blind, and the dumb were relieved at his command. His voice waked the dead, restored the dying, and fed the living. Of his almighty power there cannot be a doubt with such as credit his history.

And we see some traces of his sovereignty, although this attribute is evidently concealed by the very design of his incarnation. He came to teach the truth, to save men's lives, and not to destroy them; to explain, rather than cloud the purposes of heaven. Still in many things that he did he concealed his motives, and gave no account of his purpose. He performed cures in Capernaum, and not in Nazareth, where he was bred, and where they claimed a right to his mercy. He blasted the innocent fig-tree because it did not yield him fruit, while yet the time of figs was not come. He scourged the market-men from the temple, and refused to tell them by what authority he acted. He selected his apostles from the fishing-boat and the shop of the tentmaker, passing by the scribes, and pharisees, and lawyers. And in all his distributions of grace, he chose whom he would to love and follow him, and left whom he would to perish.

He acted with an independence which bespoke him the sovereign Lord of his own kingdom. He took counsel of none. His own apostles he made acquainted with his purposes no farther than was necessary for their comfort and usefulness. Many of the most decisive steps relative to his kingdom he appears to have taken without giving any indications that he acted by a wisdom not his own, or a power not his own. His infinity, his eternity, his ubiquity, and his spirituality, as they are properties of divinity, were in a measure concealed by his humanity, or were attributes which could not be clearly exhibited in a point of time. We know that he possessed them all, but we gather this knowledge from the testimony of Scripture.

His *wisdom*, which forms the connecting link between his natural and moral attributes, was conspicuous in all he did. His very enemies acknowledged that he taught as never man taught. We think we see a supernatural wisdom in all his plans, in the clearness with which he exhibited truth, the promptness with which he answered every question, the acuteness with which he silenced his opponents, and the success which attended all his movements. A wisdom more than human, his enemies being judges, guided all the operations of his kingdom.

His *holiness* he displayed in his own perfect obedience to the

law, in his unqualified approbation of the obedience of others, and his frowns upon every transgressor. In his determination not to destroy the law but to fulfil it, and in his dying to fulfil its penalty in behalf of those whom his mercy would save, he gave the strongest possible testimony that he was holy as God is holy.

His *justice* was less conspicuous than many other moral attributes, because his errand into our world was to snatch rebels from its power by his own blood. He would not be a judge between a man and his brother, and would not condemn the adulteress. And yet never did any one so strictly observe the rules of righteousness as he did, and never had those rules been so clearly exhibited as we find them in his instructions. The grand rule embracing all others, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," was never exhibited till it dropped from his lips. Thus, not to mention that in promotion of justice he laid down his life, it is manifest that he made it a first law of his kingdom that justice should be done to all beings.

His *truth* and *faithfulness* are without a parallel. What he said always accorded with strict veracity. All his promises he fulfilled, and every promise is sure to be accomplished. Never did he speak of things past, present, or future, but his language accorded with fact; and if all men are liars, he must have been more than human. His whole life was a perfect comment upon his own assertion that he came into the world to declare the truth.

His *goodness* and his *mercy* none could ever doubt. He spent his life to make the wretched happy, and died to save them from endless misery. He mourned and wept over those who would not be made happy, and prayed in his last hour that his murderers might be forgiven.

Thus every attribute of divinity which could be exhibited in connection with human nature, and in a point of time such as was his public ministry, was clearly displayed as inherent in the Lord Jesus Christ.

If we hear it said that he grew in wisdom, and in stature, and in favor with God and man; if we find him receiving intelligence like other men, and praying as he taught them to pray, this only proves, what no one denies, that he was strictly and properly a man as well as God. His humanity would have been doubted if in every thing but sin he had not exhibited the properties of human nature. Hence he hungered, and thirsted, and was weary; he was grieved, he wept, he prayed, he bled, he sweat, and he suffered. All this must be to render him a man. And yet he could create the very

bread for which he hungered, and the wine for which he thirsted ; could sustain his own weakness, and take up the life he laid down. He could do for himself the very things which he asked the Father to do for him. While he lay in the manger, and while he hung on the tree, he still sustained the government of the world, and was the mighty God, the everlasting father, the prince of peace.

And it seems to us that these opposite attributes must meet in one who is both God and man. Why because we see weakness shall we deny his deity, rather than deny his humanity, because we see him possessed of infinite power. Some have taken one side of this question and some the other. There have been many who have denied his humanity, and we live in a day when others are attempting to strip him of his divinity. But the prophets foresaw in the child that should be born a junction of divine and human attributes. He was the mighty God, and yet he was to hang upon a tree ; he was to be a man of sorrows, and yet Jehovah in addressing him styles him the man that is my fellow ; he was made under the law, and yet the government of the universe was upon his shoulders. And what the prophets thus foretold is manifest in all his history. He could still the sea, and yet was in an agony on the approach of the hour of his dissolution ; he could raise the dead, and yet died himself.

Unable to see how these different attributes can be in the same person, some have asserted, and would have us believe, that all that was more than human were mere borrowed attributes ; that Jesus was a man like other men, or at least a mere creature, and that God granted him for the time being divine attributes. Now we read that God will not give his glory to another ; but whether God is not believed while he thus asserts, or whether men have discovered that as a loan is not a gift, so God may permit a creature to use temporarily attributes which are not permanently his, I leave you to judge. We are reminded, I know, that prophets and apostles wrought miracles, did what mere men unassisted could not do, in other words, were for a time endowed with supernatural power ; and the question is triumphantly asked, Wherein do the cases differ. The prophets and apostles were men, mere men, yet were empowered to do what belonged to the prerogatives of Jehovah, and what else is true of the Lord Jesus Christ ? With regard to these assertions I remark,

1. The Lord Jesus Christ acted as if these attributes which he exhibited were his own. He did not exhibit any signs of dependence on the will of another to enable him to do his mighty works.

When he stilled the storm he merely said, "Peace, be still." When he dispossessed the demoniacs he commanded them to go out. When he healed diseases he took an attitude highly independent, "I will, be thou whole." When he delivered predictions he did not say, as the prophets did, "Thus saith the Lord." When he raised the dead his language was, "Lazarus come forth." He spoke of what *he* had done, and would do. He associated himself with the Father, and said, "We will come to him and make our abode with him." And when others spoke of what he had done, he never disclaimed the praise, or referred them to God as the author of these works. When he had communicated blessings to the sufferers he permitted them to give him all the praise. Now all this would have been unpardonable impudence in a creature the most exalted. There was never seen any thing like it in the prophets or the apostles. They used the power of working miracles as a borrowed attribute, and constantly ascribed all the glory to God. If others offered to worship them, they shrunk from the honor and declared themselves to be mere men.

2. The Lord Jesus Christ assured his disciples that the attributes he employed *were his own*, and the praise *his due*. He assured them that he was one with the Father, and that it was the duty of all men to honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He assured them that he had power on earth to forgive sins, and encouraged them to apply to him for pardon. He spoke of being in the Father in the same sense that the Father was in him. If then he was a mere creature, and had no honor or power but that which was loaned and temporary, he certainly betrayed his trust as no agent ever did before, and accumulated about himself the glory due to him who sent him.

3. It is certain that beings in all worlds viewed him with a respect which it would seem could not have been his due had he appeared great only in borrowed attributes. We hear the Father say, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." The disciples addressed their prayers to him, called him their Lord, and committed their spirits into his hand. Said Peter, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." Devils did him honor, feared his power, and trembled at his approach. The Jews understood him to assert that he was equal with God. And he seems to have permitted all about him to retain their high views of his person and character.

4. The Lord Jesus Christ speaks of himself, and is spoken of, as possessing these attributes before he came in the flesh and since his ascension. Said he "Before Abraham was I am." And said

an apostle, with reference to him, "For by him were all things created that are in heaven, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him." And he is represented as continuing to govern the world as mediator till the judgment, when he will deliver up the kingdom to the Father. Still, however, he is to be worshipped equally with the Father for ever, and will doubtless for ever reign with him. There will continue to be ascribed to him "Power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Now who can believe that God can loan to a mere creature all his attributes, and give assurance that he shall enjoy them and the honors they attract to him, for ever? What absurdity can be more glaring? Hence what a rotten and miserable scheme it is which thus degrades the Redeemer and robs the gospel system of all its glory.

That still as mediator he acted in a delegated capacity, we know and are not disposed to deny. That in this character he was inferior to the Father, or acted under him, none will dispute. But that still he is invested with all the rights of Jehovah, and that every attribute of the true God is his without derivation, or loan, or bequest, is to me as manifest as that any other doctrine of the Bible is true.

The scheme of reasoning which vests the Redeemer with borrowed attributes, would throw us afloat on points the most obvious. How can we know that the being which we call man is any other than a brute beast vested for a few days with the loan of intelligence? He may to-morrow rot and perish like the ox. We do not use the power of reason, more as if it were an inherent property of our nature, than did the Lord Jesus Christ the high and holy attributes which come into view in his history. It would seem to me far easier to doubt whether men had any other than a borrowed intelligence, than to doubt the Deity of Christ. In infancy man seems like a mere animal, and often he reaches a similar state in old age. How can we know, then, that there awaits us any other existence beyond the grave than a mere beastly existence, if any. True intelligence was attached to us for a time, and we hoped to think and reason for ever, but this may all be fallacy on the principle that we oppose. Men have been styled angels in disguise, but we have, it seems, arrived at the conclusion that they are *brutes* in disguise, and may soon lay aside the intelligence which assimilates us to the angels.

REMARKS.

1. The subject may inspire God's people with confidence. The Savior, we trust, is the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace. He is doubtless able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him. How can we distrust such a Savior? or be ashamed of such a Savior? or live in the neglect of such a Savior? What a glory does his Godhead give to the scheme of redemption. Those whose Savior is a man or angel may well yield to gloom and despondency; but he whose Savior built and will judge the world, is the mighty God, has the keys of hell and of death, may cast off every fear, may rejoice and be happy.

2. The subject may show us how great is the crime of rejecting the Savior. If God himself would come down to save us, our salvation must be an important object, and our ruin an incalculable loss. And how daring the impudence of disregarding a message brought to us from heaven by the Son of God! How tremendous must be the ruin of gospel sinners!

3. The subject may help us to try our religion. If in Jesus Christ we see the whole of the Divine character, we may by discovering whether we love him, know whether we love the Father.

SERMON XLVI.

THE HONEST AND FAITHFUL MINISTRY.

CORINTHIANS IV. 1, 2.

Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

THE ministry of the reconciliation is an office peculiar as to its responsibility, its trials, its honors, and its enjoyments. We are placed in the office through the instrumentality of men, but have our commission from heaven. We negotiate a reconciliation between God, and a rebel world. Men are *saved* by our ministry, if we do our duty; if we are unfaithful they are *lost*. If we give them not the timely alarm, we must answer for their blood. We must meet our hearers in the last day, at the judgment seat, and must know, when no mistake can be corrected, what has been the bearing of our ministry upon their everlasting destiny.

Hence we must do our duty, at the risk of interest, reputation, and life. Under every dispensation, the messengers of God have but one plain track, they must hazard the danger of being faithful. Jeremiah might not withhold his message, when he must write in a dungeon, when he must anathematize the monarch who imprisoned him, and when his message would impeach his loyalty and his patriotism, and endanger his life. Paul must do his duty in the face of stripes, the dungeon, and the cross. The hope that we can fully please the holy God, who sends us, and the disloyal to whom we are sent, is a fruitless hope; and none but the traitor will ask, whose pleasure he shall seek. If we had no interest of our own to risk, the honest man would aim to do his Master honor. But personal perdition hangs over us if we compromise the honors of our Lord. Men *should* be pleased with us when we do our duty, but men are not what they *should be*, else they had needed no gospel. The same depravity that prompts them to hate the government of Jehovah, renders them hostile to any conditions of peace, that will consist with his honor. Hence the minister of Christ, who cultivates a bending conscience, and is seen carefully providing for himself, at the expense of his Master, is of all men the most miserable, and the most contemptible.

But upon a ministry thus exposed, God has poured the highest honors. Not the gospel simply, but the gospel in the lips of men, he has pledged himself to use as the grand instrument of redeeming the world. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Not the very angels, who minister to those who shall be the heirs of salvation, have a commission more dignified. We are workers together with God, in laying the foundation and rearing the superstructure of a spiritual temple, whose topstones are to be laid with shouting, Grace, grace, unto it!

And with the *responsibility* and the *trials* of the office, God has mingled not only *honors*, but *enjoyments*. The work is pleasant. To study divine truth and proclaim the divine honor; to be conversant with sacraments and Sabbaths, with prayer and praise, is living, if the heart be right, hard by the Oracle of God. And when the work is done, the *reward* is great. They that turn many to righteousness, are to shine in the kingdom of their father, and as the stars for ever and ever.

The apostle in the context had been commending his office: had showed, by various arguments, that it was more honorable than a ministry under the law. The law he denominates the *letter*, the gospel the *spirit*. That was the ministration of condemnation and death; *this* the ministration of the *Spirit*, and the ministration of *righteousness*. The *legal* ministration was *temporary*, but that of the *gospel* remains a *lasting* and *permanent* establishment. Hence Moses, conscious that he was the minister of a dispensation that would soon be eclipsed by one more glorious, veiled his face. But the heralds of the gospel may use great plainness of speech, as they proclaim a system in which there is nothing dark or mysterious. The true light has shined; the veil is taken away, and we now behold the glory of God, not enveloped in clouds and darkness, but with open face, as in a glass, shining in the face of Jesus Christ, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

And while we gaze upon this brightness, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory. And all is accomplished by the Spirit of the Lord, else the world had abode still in its native hideous darkness. Thus does the apostle, when he contemplates the dispensation of which he is a minister, rise to a tone of triumph, where language and figure are exhausted. Therefore, says he, seeing we have this ministry, we faint not. The office is so dignified, that no trials shall shake our confidence, no onset subdue our courage. We will neither use dishonesty, craft, or deceit,

but commend ourselves to every man's conscience, by manifesting the truth. Thus interesting is the attitude in which the apostle places himself, and all who after him should publish salvation to a dying world. Following the train of thought he suggests, I remark,

I. *The mercy of God qualifies men to be his ministers.* The very messengers he employs are by nature hostile to the truths and glories which the gospel reveals, and to the temper and duties it enjoins. The character of God and of the Savior displeases them. There cluster in the Godhead the very attributes that render character unlovely to the carnal mind. We naturally spurn the kingdom that God erects, and the heaven he reveals. All that was odious in the law, and more yet, we see in the gospel, till the eyes of our understandings are enlightened. It contains a law as rigid, as that which issued from the flames of Sinai, while it digs a *deeper pit*, and kindles a *more consuming fire* than were employed to avenge the broken law of Moses.

We are by nature like our hearers, the prey of a carnal mind, that is not subject to the law of God. Hence, till the grace of God renew us, how disqualified are we to be ministers of the reconciliation! But of just such men, sanctified, he makes ministers. He forgives them, and loves them, and they are then called to plead with rebels, just such as they were themselves up to the hour of the new birth. They have but just quitted the standard of revolt, and lo! they are seen standing hard by the host they have abandoned, proclaiming a pardon in the name of the Lord Jesus. Paul had gone to lay waste that very church, which a few days afterward it was his honor and his joy to edify. The devourer was caught with the very prey in his teeth, and was made a lamb. The disciples were afraid of him; nor can we wonder: a few days gone and he was a fiend; and very much so of all Christ's ministers. We mingled with the congregation of the ungodly, and could resist the kindest entreaties of a pitying Redeemer. Not one of all the multitude had a conscience more polluted, or a temper more revolting. If grace has sanctified us, how surprising our escape. *Perdition* we deserved, but are made the messengers of life. What a humiliating retrospect! One look behind, covers us with shame, cast we that look but through a little space. Then the overtures of the gospel, which we now proclaim, were like music to the deaf adder. Some of us, perhaps, were pressing on to perdition like Paul, *in the very van* of that

multitude which now it is our effort to save. On this point I hardly know how to say enough. We were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." We "walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."

And we had a *mind benighted*, as was the *heart depraved*. Whether the apostle had reference or not to the supernatural gifts, by which he and his fellows had become qualified to serve God in the gospel, we may well ascribe to his grace any small degrees of preparation in us for such an embassy. That gospel which it has become our duty and our delight to publish, little as we now understand it, was once still less understood. The Bible was a dead letter. Neither was the mind imbued with its doctrines, nor the memory stored with its facts, nor the tongue used to its dialect. It seems incredible, when we look as it were but to yesterday, and recollect how gross was our ignorance of the gospel, that we should now be the teachers of that same religion to the multitudes who are perishing as we were for lack of knowledge. But the grace of God furnished us the means of improvement, and poured in the few rays of light, covered as we still are with ignorance, by the aid of which light we are introduced into an office similar to that which once was filled by the Son of God.

But the grace of God was still conspicuous, else our *unworthiness* had debarred us from a situation so sublime and so honored. Might we but have occupied the obscurest place in God's house, been only door-keepers, it had been more than we deserved. The shame of having been totally depraved, and the guilt of having stood in the ranks of revolt so long, the habits of indolence we had acquired, and the still remaining passions, and prejudices, and the whole catalogue of moral plagues, deep rooted in our nature—all seemed to forbid us the occupancy of a station so honored. God has indeed committed the treasure of the gospel to earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of him and not of us. How well does the language of the prophet become us. "Behold, Lord, I cannot speak, for I am a child." And that of the apostle, "Unto me whom am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

And where is it that God has put us? Into almost the very same office once filled by prophets and apostles, and even by the

Lord Jesus himself. He has emancipated slaves, and sent them to invite back a strayed world. He has placed us on the ramparts of his Zion, and has entrusted the prosperity of his kingdom, the honor of his government, the vindication of his law, and the glories of his name, to our sleepless, and watchful, and devoted fidelity. On our way to the place of execution, and the halter about our necks, he hailed us, and pardoned us, and now here we stand, between the condemned, and the arm of justice, between the burning glories of the Godhead, and the wretches whom his ire threatens to consume. We are occupying the station that Moses filled, while Israel were dancing around the golden calf; or that of David while he offered sacrifice on the threshing floor of the Jebusite; or that of Abraham when he sent up his last petition in behalf of the devoted cities—to turn away the wrath of heaven, to stay the plague, to ward off the storm of fire, and save, if it be possible, the abandoned transgressor.

Connected with our fidelity, are the everlasting hosannas of a multitude that no man can number, or with our neglects, the weepings and wailings of the damned. Ah, why did the holy God attach so high an office to beings so debased. Why did he not commission angels, who would have been faithful, and who were worthy of his honors. They would have brought no pollution with them, would have made no compromise of truth, would have exhibited no dire instances of apostacy, would have seen eye to eye, and might have gathered in the elect from the ranks of revolt, leaving wholly behind that multitude of hypocrites, who now pollute the ordinances of God. Well may we exclaim, "I am a worm and no man," and ascribe, with the apostle, our appointment to the work, and our equipment for it, all our success in it, and the reward, if any should be ours, to the grace of God.

II. *The ministry of the reconciliation is an office big with trials.* This we should infer from its very nature. We are the agents of negotiation, between God, a holy and a good Jehovah, and men who hate his character, his government, and his glory. We preach a gospel which, till men are sanctified, they cannot love. We are directed to describe their character, in all its odiousness, and show that they have been unreasonable and vile in every principle, and in every act of their revolt. We must warn them of a coming moment when all their sin and their shame must be uncovered. We dare hide from them no part of the truth, whether they will hear or forbear: must show them that not merely is

their conduct offensive to God, but every imagination of the thought of the heart, is evil, only evil continually. We must inculcate principles that violate every inbred sentiment of their hearts, and press maxims, and doctrines and duties, that give their whole conduct the lie, and cover their whole character with guilt and pollution. We must assure them that, as God is true it will be ill with the wicked in every stage of their being, and in whatever world God may place them. We must uncover the pit before them, must prophesy evil concerning them, must say loudly and fearlessly, that the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God, where their worm shall not die, nor their fire be quenched.

But it needs no prescience to feel assured that all this will not please. Men are not disposed to have their characters laid bare, and their hopes destroyed. The refuge of lies where they have taken sanctuary, they will not allow us with impunity to demolish. The god of this world persuades them that *he* is their *enemy* who thus beforehand brands them with the marks of perdition.

And while we are thus liable to offend, we depend on them for support. While every doctrine we preach, and every duty we urge, and every woe we announce, are at issue with the strongest biases of their hearts, we expect them to clothe our children, and fill our board with bread. While they are in the very act of doing us a kindness, we may see them violate the law of God, and may be under the odious necessity of returning the favor with reproof.

Hence trials come as certainly as death. If we watch the interest we are set to watch, and cannot be bribed to perfidy, there will grow thorns in our path, and we shall wet our couch with tears. Hence the fact that the Lord's servants have been stoned, have been sawn asunder, have been tempted, have been slain with the sword, have wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, been destitute, afflicted, tormented. Hence the scenes of persecution that fill the pages of ecclesiastical history, the agonies of the cross, the fires of the stake, the inquisitorial dungeons, and the whole catalogue of plagues, that have borne off the stage the armies of the martyrs.

III. *This same ministry furnishes an antidote to the wo it generates.* It is, of all the appointments of the court of heaven, the first. The leader of Israel had a commission less dignified. He was the minister of a transient service, promulgated a temporary economy, was conversant with types and symbols. He released men from

the chains of a human and temporary bondage, led them to an earthly Canaan, and built them a perishable sanctuary. But all these were the mere shadows of good things to come. Ours is the office, not of *typifying*, but of *substantiating*; not of *predicting*, but of *narrating*; not of breaking *the bands of a temporary bondage*, but the *league with death*, and the *agreement with hell*; not of leading men to a paradise of hills and brooks of water, but to a city not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; not to a crumbling material sanctuary, but to the very throne itself of God. Under the ministration we occupy, Sinai blazes not with wrath, but with glory, God is seen not through a veil but with open face; "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

Such the office; every trial is light. He who may fill the first embassy in a kingdom, will suffer any privations, will risk any dangers, will endure any trials, will submit to any hardships. He will traverse, with such a commission, the dreariest heaths, and the stormiest seas, will inhale in any clime the most polluted atmosphere, will live in the wildest solitude, with beings the most rapacious and bloody. And shall men endure, supported by the honors of a human embassy, trials, dangers, and death, without complaint, which the minister of the Lord Jesus, with the high hopes that attach to his office, cannot endure? If insulted we think of our commission, and feel the inspiration of its honors, and instantly rise superior to shame. He whom heaven has commissioned, needs no human applause to animate him. "He that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." And what if men do condemn, while God approves? There lies an appeal from every human tribunal. To none of these lower courts are we amenable, in a sense that can excite alarm. Said an apostle, "It is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment." To our own Master we stand or fall. If our message does not please men, we have only to see to it, that it has not been altered in our hands, and, if not, take courage. When we can see affixed to every doctrine we preach the broad seal of heaven, we have no farther concern, except to inquire if we have chosen out acceptable words, and felt a right spirit. If to the book of instruction we add or diminish, the deed blots our names from the book of life, and brings upon our heads the plagues recorded. If men will not hear us, we have only to weep in secret places for their pride.

If to men it should seem that we urge them too assiduously, we

have only to assure them that they must believe or die. The direction is, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." Our stand is between men and the pit, and our business to stop them. If they now think us too urgent, they will curse our supineness when they have perished. Before we have done with them, they will know the truth of all we have said, and more yet, and will wonder that we could believe it at all, and proclaim it so coldly.

If men are angry, still there is hope. This may be the first step to conviction and faith, and they may still be our crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus. The gospel may produce wrath, and still be a savor of life. The tenant of the tombs raved, and then believed. Our assurance is that Christ is able to bind the strong man.

But then we fear the worst, and have no hope that the miserable beings will live, whom we would warn and waken, still we may be to Christ a sweet savor, though it be of death unto death. Christ has not suspended our *reward* on our *success*. He will provide for his ministers who have dared to be faithful, though the whole population of the apostacy should go in a mass to perdition. "Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord." For the *faithfulness* of our ministry, not for the *effects*; for the *good we intended to do*, not for the *good we have done*, shall we be tried in the last day. If the Lord has made us rulers over his house, to give them their meat in due season, blessed are those servants whom their Lord when he cometh shall find so doing. And he will soon return. In a few days we shall have his decision upon our conduct, and till then it is of small importance what is human opinion respecting us.

Thus the godly minister takes courage. If our toil be hard, we serve a good master, and the period of rest is nigh. If we should even faint and die under the fatigues of the service, still we can die in no other circumstances so honorably. If our present privations are many, and our joys few, there is just before us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. If the corner of the vineyard where we labor is unpromising, still we know that Christ shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. We have only to fill the place appointed us, as God shall give us ability, and for what remains he will provide. Do we but cast our seed corn upon the moist field, we shall see it after many days. Should the seed lie buried in the dust till we are in heaven, we may still see the

fruit of our toil. Thus our commission so presents its consolations in the time of trial, that we may well say with the apostle, "Having this ministry as we have received mercy, we faint not."

IV. *The text prescribes that open and ingenuous conduct, which it is the duty of Christ's ministers on all occasions to exhibit.* Let us notice them,

1. *In their daily walk.* The apostle says of himself and his fellows, probably in allusion to the intrigue and duplicity of the false teachers, "That they renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, and did not walk in craftiness." He does not mean to imply that this had ever been their course. They had, from the period of their vocation to the apostleship, refused to reach any point of enterprise, by deception and fraud. Even when Paul says of himself, that, on a certain occasion, being crafty, he caught them with guile, he is thought merely to have alluded to the language of his enemies.

The ministers of Christ have nothing to hide, have no budget of secrets, and may say and do nothing that is inconsistent with simplicity and godly sincerity, either in their social and commercial transactions, or in connection with the functions of their office. The world will doubt, if we show duplicity in one case, whether we are sincere in any case. If we can smile complacently upon the man we would betray and ruin; if with one hand we can embrace, while the dagger is fast held in the other; can *soothe*, and *flatter*, and *hate*; men will have no confidence in us, when we thunder the anathemas of the law, or breathe out the counsels and the accents of mercy. If it cannot be said of the minister of Christ, that he is a sincere and honest man, nothing can be said of him that does not put the whole brotherhood to shame. The man may be able in theology, and in oratory, may be a profound general scholar, may have made the multitude bow to him; but if he be, to adopt a very homely, though a very significant figure, a two-sided man; if his assent and his smile are not tokens of approbation, and we may fear he will betray us, when pledged to serve us, then has he not renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, and will be as readily suspected of insincerity in the pulpit as by the fireside. Heaven's ambassador must exhibit in his countenance, and on the face of his whole deportment, the simplicity of the man of God. The veriest wretch with whom he has intercourse, ought not to doubt for a moment his honesty.

Toward his ministerial brethren, duplicity is doubly odious.

We are but distinct agents, attached to the same grand embassy, and sent to make overtures to the same disloyal multitude. When we have no trust in each other, the foe is strengthened, and our defeat and shame sure—the least approximation to duplicity destroys confidence. We may differ in shades of doctrine and points of duty, and still, if honest men, may co-operate, and there may be in the general embassy an efficiency and a unity, that shall pour honor upon Christ, and shame upon the adversary. We must have confidence in each other's prompt and cordial co-operation, or the world we have come to sanctify, will be strengthened in every deadly and desperate principle of revolt, and will sleep on till they are waked by the terrors of the last trumpet.

The motives to such a confidence are obvious. Our trials and our enemies are numerous, and are the same, and the same our joys and our friends. We serve the same Master, and hope for the same heaven. Without an asylum in each other's bosom, in this outcast world, where we find so rarely an honest friend, we should be the loneliest of all flesh. No union can be more sacred. There is not only Christian sympathy, but the fellowship of office. There belong to the sacred ministry special hopes and promises. In what relationship do the hidden things of dishonesty wear an aspect so monstrous, or wage a war so cruel, as when they disturb the intercourse, and break the compact that binds together the ambassadors of the Lord Jesus? One would sooner lose confidence in his mother's children, and betray his offspring, than see marred the fellowship of the Divine legation. That Jesuitical fraud, nicknamed *pious*, so long current in the church of Rome, is the worm that now devours that polluted community. May it go, with its foster mother, to perdition, and never find a lodgment in the bosom of Christ's ministers. Let us notice the minister of Christ,

2. *In his official capacity.* While the apostles renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, and would not walk in craftiness, *so neither would they handle the word of God deceitfully.* They would not, nor may we, hide, misrepresent, or leave out of view, any truth, meant to be conveyed to us in our Book of instructions. The ambassador of Christ resolves, that the Bible, in all its plainness and simplicity, shall be permitted to pour forth its precepts, its doctrines, its denunciations, unadulterated, upon the congregated multitude of the ungodly. To inquire, what is pleasing, and what is popular, and what is safe, belongs only to the traitor, who would make a kiss the signal of arrest.

We may choose out acceptable words, may watch for the best moment when to press an unwelcome truth: this is duty. And in illustrating truth we may put to use all the softness and sweetness of language and figure that is possible, still no truth may be covered up or misstated. We may say to the righteous, it shall be well with them, but we must with equal plainness say to the wicked, it shall be ill with them. "He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." We may dwell upon the glories of heaven, till we, and all about us who believe, shall long to ascend, but we must also raise the covering of the pit, till the ungodly, if they will not repent, shall begin to feel the scorch of its torments. He who would not handle the word of God deceitfully, cannot suffer his unregenerate hearers to choose what doctrines he shall preach, or what duties he shall urge, or what follies he shall spare, or what the fervency of soul he shall breathe into his message. If he believe a doctrine, he will not hide his faith; if there prevail an error, he dare not conceal his dissent; nor against any vice, however popular, can fail to bear his prompt and unequivocal testimony.

The minister of the gospel, *who conceals his faith*, is a traitor, and goes over soon to the enemy. And while he stays he is a plague and a nuisance. "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle." Why have a plain and pungent and intelligible Bible, and put it into the hands of a crafty ministry, to be neutralized and tamed, and mangled, before it can reach the conscience? As well may the *Bible* be a *riddle*, or a *dream*, as the *herald* a *knave*. He can fritter down its doctrines till the whole Book is a mere ballad. A people with such a ministry are in a case as pitiable as the wandering Tartar

V. *The text instructs Christ's ministers how they may best commend themselves to the consciences of men. By manifestation of the truth.* To be useful, we must have an advocate in the conscience of the people. Many may not relish the doctrines we deliver, and may hate our faithfulness, but there may still be, and there must be the conviction, that we are honest men, who act with reference to the judgment. In such a case, one may be useful, even to the men who cordially disrelish the whole testimony of God. They may kindle with rage at the juncture when the truth has found an avenue to the conscience.

And this ascendancy is gained by an undisguised exhibition of the truth. When men see that we dare not go beyond the word

of the Lord, and that we dare say all that God has bidden us; that we feel ourselves fast bound by the letter of our commission, then the conscience of our people, if well enlightened, will take part with God, and do homage to our integrity. They may wish that we would alter, somewhat, the message we have received from heaven, may even demand that the point of truth be blunted, may refuse to attend upon a ministry that handles so unceremoniously their passions, their practice, and their prejudices; but if we comply, we lose their respect, and their judgment denounces us contemptible hypocrites. They would rejoice to be successful, but the moral sense would reprobate us. While men writhe under the thrusts of truth, they yield the highest homage to the man whom no bribery can corrupt, who can be contentedly poor and homeless, but cannot be treacherous.

The American ambassador at some foreign court, may give offence, by pressing our claims; but should he violate his commission, and compromise the honor of his country and the rights of his constituents, he would lose all respect abroad and at home, and sink into deep and lasting contempt. Let it be seen early that no threat can scare us, that no bribe can buy us, that no considerations of ease, honor, or affluence, can for a moment, put our integrity to a stand, or bring us to yield an inch of the territory of truth: thus we give evidence that we have a conscience, and the enemy will be afraid that God will protect us. Men suspect, in this case, that our message is true, and fear that their obstinacy will undo them, and, feel as they may, they yield us respect. Here that Divine maxim is verified, "whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." The most contemptible of all men, is the man who holds this high commission, but employs his talents to lower down the terms of reconciliation, to the wishes of the unsanctified. He will stand yoked with the wretch who betrays his country, and goes over to be hated and despised in the camp and country of the enemy. But the man who is true to his Lord, who sacredly adheres to his commission, should he not be favored with any very signal success, may be respected, and happy, and safe.

FINALLY—*The apostle and his brethren felt themselves urged to faithfulness, by the consideration, that God was present. Commending ourselves to every man's conscience, in the sight of God. It was the last promise of the Lord Jesus, "Lo, I am with you*

always even unto the end of the world!" The remotest idea of compromising the truth is immediately known to God, and is peculiarly provoking. All sin is committed in his presence. But of all sins, how flagrant and daring is the crime of deliberately altering the message he has given us to deliver to a rebel world! If we are faithful he is present to comfort and support us, but if we shrink, through the fear of man, which bringeth a snare, he is present to despise and reprobate us. Hence, let this be our motto, "Thou God seest me;" and let us live and die under a solemn impression of this truth. Let us have a character, and exhibit a conduct upright in his view. Then the gospel we preach will be to us a savor of life unto life. The all-seeing God will watch us till we die, will guard the slumbers of the sepulchre, and will raise us to enjoy his smiles for ever.

How delightful the thought, when slavish fear has not chased away hope, that we minister in the very presence of our master. If we are in our study he is there, or on our knees he is there, or in the consecrated pulpit, he is there; to know our embarrassments, lay our fears, raise our hopes, and pour consolation into our hearts. From what duty can we shrink, of what foe be afraid, by what sufferings be disheartened, while we serve a God at hand and not a God afar off, and may at any moment roll our cares upon One who careth for us. He who had not rather be a minister of Christ with all its trials, than wear a crown, knows not the pleasures of the service.

REMARKS.

1. *The subject is very humiliating to Christ's ministers.* We enter the office by mere sufferance. We were under a sentence of condemnation, and any thing short of perdition is mercy, and yet so honored! Hence no position becomes us but that of the most complete prostration of soul. Our appropriate prayer is, "God be merciful to me a sinner." From no station of usefulness, enjoyment or honor, can we fail to look back to the rock whence we were hewn, and the hole of the pit whence we were digged. None were more unworthy of the office than we, none more richly deserved perdition, or if we reach heaven will celebrate our escape from death in sweeter Alleluias. How free, how sovereign, and how rich the grace that could raise such beings to a station so distinguished!

2. *The subject will help us to judge, who are the true ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ.* They have renounced the hidden things

of dishonesty, do not walk in craftiness, nor handle the word of God deceitfully. In the aspect of their whole moral deportment there is seen the open ingenuousness of truth. When they have known the mind of God they dare divulge it; they dare, even if the message be unpleasant. If faithfulness should endanger their interest, offend their benefactors, cut off supplies from their table, and make their children barefoot and houseless, still in their message will be seen the truth, the whole truth, the truth simple, and unadulterated, as it dropped from the lips of Jesus. If they must be lodged in a dungeon, and see kindled the fires that are to consume them, still supported by his presence who said, "I will never leave thee," it is presumed you would see associated with their rags, and their wretchedness and martyrdom, a soul too honest to betray the truth.

But we see, occasionally, the opposite of all this. The man presents himself in the attitude of Christ's minister, but makes it his great object to accommodate his message to the taste of the poor dying creature whom it should be his object to awaken and sanctify. He believes many a doctrine, and reads many a precept that he dare not urge upon his people, and sees approaching dangers against which he dare not warn them. His first concern is to secure to himself the honors and the emoluments of his office, even should it require the compromise of the Divine authority, and the Divine glory. It grieves us to know that he is likely to perish himself, and his deluded hearers with him. And moreover, he generates a contagion that spreads like the plague through all the Churches, and brings the reproach of the whole apostacy upon the men who have a less pliant conscience, and courage enough to do their duty; producing a fastidiousness of taste, that prepares men to resist the pressure of truth, till they have reached perdition. And it should greatly grieve us to apprehend that our children, when we are dead, may be thrown under such a ministry; may imbibe the contagion, may deny the Lord that bought them, may hate the doctrines that should sanctify them, and under the influence of a smooth and fair and popular religion, glide down gently and smoothly to the place of torment.

3. *In a work so dignified, so responsible, and so perilous, we ought to expect the confidence, the affection, and the aid, of those for whose salvation this ministry is established.*

It should secure us their confidence to know that our ministry admits of nothing concealed and mysterious, but is open, undisguised, and ingenuous. We spread before the people our whole

commission, make our design known, and open to them our whole hearts. We are willing to earn the confidence we ask, and would say to the world, if on any point we betray your interest, believe any doctrine, or credit any precept that we do not urge, or hide the danger that approaches you, then be distrustful and jealous, believe that we have run before we were sent, and that under the guise of the lamb, there rages the appetite of the wolf. If otherwise, we deserve your assurance. The office that God instituted, that Christ personally honored, should hold a place very sacred, and very high, in your esteem.

I know there are sections of Christendom where the vilest of men who do not deserve esteem, serve at the altar. But by their fruits ye shall know them. If they deal in the hidden things of dishonesty, or walk in craftiness, or handle the word of God deceitfully, you are not obligated to esteem them the ministers of Christ. And still it sometimes happens that a false and deceitful ministry is more popular than the one that Christ approves. It aims to commend itself, *not to the conscience* but *to the unsanctified heart*. It prophesies smooth things, heals the wounds of the awakened conscience slightly, and assures the wicked that it shall be well with them. It covers the pit over, and makes great efforts to lay the cry of alarm. The men whom you may trust, expose your danger, and depict your depravity, lead you to search your hearts, and try your hopes; and they deserve and need your confidence. They have trials enough, when their people rally about them, and confide in their integrity.

Let me say to all the lost, it is equally your duty and your interest to love the ministers of Jesus Christ. They come to you on an errand the most kind, and it may happen, and God may know it, that when they disturb you the most, they feel the most tenderly. When it has seemed to you that they must hate you, they have gone home and wept over you, and interceded with God in agonized prayer for your eternal life. So your child thought you cruel, when you tore the thorn from his wounded hand; but was you not kind?

One thing it is easy to know, he who so presses home upon your conscience the doctrines and duties of the gospel as to offend you, is not probably governed by selfish motives. His interest, *when no reference is had to the last day*, would lead him so to soften his message as not to give offence. You would then the more generously fill his board. Still, when you find him unbendingly faithful, he deserves your esteem the more. Else you tempt

him to betray your interest. When you move him from his integrity, he but goes down with you to the pit; or if God forgive him, and he is saved, he may first have destroyed you and your children. Let him then be faithful, and still have your affection, then his work will be pleasant, and your danger diminished.

And the ministers of Christ will also need your *help*. The enterprise in which they are employed is the redemption of men from eternal misery. And they have all the weaknesses of other men, and need in a work so awfully grand, the prompt co-operation of all who value the soul. The seed they sow must be watered with prayer, their duties must be made easy by your friendship, and their trials be softened by your sympathies. When the burdens of the ministry are thus lightened, they are still weighty enough for the shoulders of an angel. Our constant exclamation is, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Next to him who in the very work itself has continued faithful unto death, the high reward of heaven will be his, who has aided our efforts, and has labored with us in the gospel. If you could have helped in *building* the world, it would have been a service less honorable than that of helping to redeem it. It was built of *clay*, but must be redeemed with *blood*; it took its form in a *week*, but its redemption has been progressing these *six thousand years*.

You may contribute to save a soul from death, and cover a multitude of sins; may snatch a spirit that can never die, from perdition, and elevate it to a seat high in bliss; may substitute the glories of heaven for the darkness and horrors of the pit; and changed the wailings of the damned into anthems of Alleluia. By motives mighty like these, you are urged to ease the burdens of the ministry, to render the service pleasant and efficient by your sympathies, your counsels, and your prayers. It is sweet to know that we have sometimes the entire confidence as well as the prayers of those whom it is our work to build up in the faith and purity of the gospel. It cheers the solitude of many a midnight hour, that we are preparing a repast for the disciples of the Lord Jesus, who, when they have fed upon the word, will pray for him who published it. May every such prayer for us be answered, and then returned into your own bosoms, and when the lips are cold and the tongue silent that address you, and the sanctuary where you worship has crumbled, and other generations fill the places we occupy, may we be together about the throne, to sing and say, "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed *be* his glorious name for

ever : and let the whole earth be filled *with* his glory." Amen and amen.

Finally, it is a crime of no small magnitude to treat with neglect or contempt a ministry formed after the pattern of the text. The embassy that God commissions deserves regard. "He that receiveth you, receiveth me." If ministers are faithful, it is not at the option of their people, whether they shall receive or reject their message, and treat kindly, or otherwise, those who hold the high commission of ambassadors of Jesus Christ. To their own Master they are accountable for every doctrine they advance, every duty they urge, and the proper application of every promise they repeat ; and you too are obligated to insert that doctrine, if true, into your creed, to practice that duty, and apply legitimately that promise. If they deliver the true gospel, and you reject it, it proves to you a savor of death unto death. Even cold indifference is criminal toward that ministry which has immediate connection with your salvation, and the eternal life of your offspring. God will punish those who treat rudely his ministers. We could point you to the places where sterility and death have reigned for half a century, when the hand had been raised against one whom God sent to them with the news of pardon. The law in Israel, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm," has been renewed in other terms under the gospel. Blessed God, let no child of mine ever hurt or offend thy ministers.

SERMON XLVII.

THE WEALTHY CHRISTIAN READY TO CONTRIBUTE.

I. TIMOTHY vi. 17—19.

Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

THE Bible admirably adapts its instructions to every character and condition in human life, from the greatest monarch to the meanest slave. And this fact is an evidence that the Scriptures are from God. They teach with an authority that men uninspired would not have been likely to assume. There is no crouching, no sycophancy, no flattery. Duty is taught to every man in the same style, with the same plainness, and the same assurance. What was said of our Lord, that he taught as one having authority, is true of the whole Bible.

In the text Paul is directing Timothy what he must say to the rich. They may not be high-minded. *God* distinguishes one man from another. "In thine hand it is to make great." They may not trust in riches, for they are uncertain, and may take to themselves wings and fly away. They must trust alone in God, the living God, who giveth them richly all things to enjoy. God suffers them to enjoy their wealth, but he also commands them to *communicate enjoyment*. They are to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate. They must not even wait to be urged to this duty, but hold themselves in the attitude of handing out to others what God has put into their possession.

Thus they lay up in store for themselves a good foundation, a treasure upon which they may draw at any future period of want. Hence to be liberal renders them ultimately the more wealthy, and what is more important, enables them to lay hold on eternal life. Thus their duty and their interest are united, and are equally plain. To do good with their wealth is an important means of bringing them to heaven. It is that test of piety which God will demand of the rich. Hence said our Lord "How hardly do they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." We cannot then be kind

to this large and respectable class of men, unless we urge them to liberality, as an indispensable test of their hope. They have some liberty of choice as to the objects they will the most liberally patronize, but may not choose whether they will or will not be ready to communicate, for if they will not, they can have no evidence that they shall lay hold on eternal life.

In proceeding, I shall present an object, which seems to me to stand among the first, and urge its claims upon a single class of the wealthy. Let me say, that *It is the duty of professors of religion who have wealth to consecrate their property to the spread of the gospel.*

Ye disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, your Savior has set up a church in this world, has promised that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her, and that she shall one day embrace all nations; and calls upon you to consecrate your property to the diffusion of that gospel by which he brings men into covenant with him and makes them happy. Will you hear me, while I offer five arguments to induce you to obey him in this reasonable requisition. I will enter upon the point without detaining you a moment, and when I have done, you must act as you think proper. I assert in the

I. Place, *That "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof," and hence that he has a right to make this draft upon you.* If I fail in establishing this point, you may lay down the book, and not read another line.

You acknowledge God as the creator of all things. *Here I found his claim;* it is prior to all others. He who built all worlds, and peopled them, and gave that people all their good things, may make a demand upon them to any amount within their power, with the certainty that it cannot be protested. "His are all the beasts of the forest, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." The same is true of your silver, your merchandize, your children, your servants, and all that you have. If not, then name the good thing that you can be sure will be yours to-morrow. Begin, if you please, at the bottom of the catalogue of your comforts, and ascend, through the whole series, to the wife of your bosom, your health, and your life, and tell me which of the whole will be yours to-morrow. Dare you name nothing? Then whosesoever they are, they surely are not yours. For he who has nothing that he can hold a day, has nothing but what is borrowed. And if the good things you possess are not yours they are the Lord's, or whose are they?

And what was the Lord's at the first, because he made it, *he has carefully watched over and preserved*. Not merely could we have *had* nothing, if God had not *made it*, but we could have *kept* nothing, if God had not *preserved it*. There is no kind of independence about us; we should have been beggars, if God had not cared for us. There was an eye that watched more narrowly than we did or could, or our wealth had long since taken to itself wings and had flown away. You will own, my Christian friends, that it was the blessed God that watered your fields, and gave success to your commerce, and health to your children, that guarded your house from fire, and your lives from danger, else you would have been penniless or have perished years since. How many, once as rich as you, are now poor; or as healthy as you, are now in the grave; had a home as you have, but it burned down; had children, as it may be you have, but the cold blast came over them, and they died. And was it not the kindness of God that saved to you what you have? May he not then lay a tax upon your wealth, as large as he pleases?

But I am not through the argument. God has never *alienated* his right. He has suffered Satan to be styled the God of this world, the prince of the power of the air; but *he* owns nothing. The territories that he promised the Lord Jesus, if he would fall down and worship him, were not a foot of them his. And though men are permitted to hold under God certain rights, and which they sometimes term unalienable, still God never has, and never will, renounce his right to dispose at pleasure of all that we term ours. In a moment, if he pleases, day or night, he puts us out of our possessions, and the places that knew us know us no more for ever. Hence we can serve God only with what is his already, what he has never alienated. "Of thine own we give thee." Now that which God has put into our hands, and the right to which he has never relinquished, we may not, without the charge of embezzlement, appropriate otherwise than as he shall command us.

But I have not done. *God has often asserted his claim to what we term ours*. Once he claimed the whole world, and by a sudden and fearful dispensation, displaced every tenant that had ever occupied its soil, providing afterward for the single family that loved him. And none will say that God went without his own dominions, to lay a world waste that was the property of *another*. When he burned the cities of the plain, he but asserted, though loudly and fearfully, his right, and pressed home to the bosom and the conscience of every foe and friend he had, his claim to be

served and honored, in every valley that he had made fertile, and by every people whom his kindness had rendered prosperous.

In the ruin of all the ancient monarchies, God is seen in the attitude of asserting his claim to the kingdoms of men, as sections of his own empire, to which he will send other rulers, and other subjects, whenever he shall please. The desolating pestilences by which he has depopulated towns and cities, and the thousand nameless sweeps of death written in our gloomy history, had all their commission from heaven, to take back the life, and health, and comforts he had loaned to men. There was one kingdom we read of whose whole population went seventy years into bondage, because their land not been allowed to keep its Sabbaths, and they had not paid their tithes, and emancipated their servants at the appointed jubilee.

The storms that have wrecked our merchandize, and the fires that have devoured our cities, and all the misnamed casualties that have ruined our fortunes, have been so many claims put in by the rightful owner of all things to what we had appropriated too exclusively to our own use. And the occurrences of every day are of the same character.

I know that this is not the world of retribution, and that "No man knoweth either good or evil, by any thing that is done under the sun;" but let us not deny that God is known by the judgment that he executeth. Will he not, by repeated demands, keep men in mind that they cultivate his territory, and feed on his bounty, and are happy under his auspices? In thus asserting his claim to be served with the talents that he loans his creatures, he teaches us that one unchangeable law of his kingdom is, that he never alienates what was once his own.

I shall not offend the good man when I claim, that this has been a *disastrous*, because a *disobedient* world. Perhaps the aggregate of property lost by the various calamities that God has sent upon us, would have exactly met the claims he made upon our charity. Had that wealth been expended as he directed, it would have made the world wise and happy. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." "There is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty."

It is impossible to say how much more prosperous this world might have been, if men had expended their wealth as God would

have them; how much more frequently the showers had fallen, or more genial had been our sun, or more gentle our breezes, or mild our winters, or fertile our soil, or healthful our population, if we had been a better people, and had served the Lord with our substance. His promise must have failed, or he would have filled our barns with plenty, and caused our presses to burst out with new wine.

As the Churches shall wake to their duty, and give the world the gospel, I hope, and if infidelity scoffs, still I will hope, that much of the curse will be removed from this ill-fated territory, and God kindly stay his *rough* wind, in the day of his *east* wind. How many of its plagues will be cured, its wars prevented, its heaths made fertile, and its earthquakes stilled; and what the amount of blessings bestowed upon this poor world, when it shall become more loyal and more benevolent, none but God can know.

I cannot believe, that when we shall do as he bids us, he will so often rebuke us. When we cease to waste his goods, he will allow us to continue longer in the stewardship; when we shall be faithful in the few things, he will make us rulers over many things. If you will now consider me as having established the Divine claim, to you, and all that you have, I will proceed to say,

II. *Christians who have the means, should contribute to disseminate the gospel, because they are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.* They belong to that kingdom which the gospel was intended to establish. This fact is quite enough to give the cause I plead a strong hold upon every pious heart. Ye disciples of the Lord Jesus, read for once the charter of your hopes, and while it warms your heart, tell me if you have done half your duty. "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Thus it seems God and his people have but one interest. Hence when he commands them to spread his gospel, he but bids them to buy themselves blessings, bids them foster their own interest, and make their own kingdom happy. The Christian has by his own act identified his whole interest with that of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. If God is honored, he is happy, and God is honored in the salvation of sinners, and in the joy of his people. Hence God can command his people to do nothing but that which will bless themselves.

Now when did you know a king's son who would not joyfully

expend his father's treasures to enlarge, and strengthen, and beautify the kingdom to which he was heir? He thus polishes his own crown, and blesses his own future reign. What believer has not the same interest that God has in lengthening the cords and strengthening the stakes of Zion? He is one of the little flock, to whom it is his Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom. He is to be a king and a priest to God and the Lamb for ever. And has he still an interest distinct from his heavenly Father? And if not, he will hold all he has at the control of God, and will need only to know his duty, and will act most cheerfully.

III. *Reason why Christians who have the means, should contribute to disseminate the gospel is, that they must be merciful, as their Father in heaven is merciful.* Over that mass of misery which the apostacy has produced their pious hearts have long bled in sympathy. And their charity is not of that kind that it can content itself with saying, "Be ye warmed, and be ye filled." They have read, and have strongly felt that cutting interrogation of the apostle, "Who-soever hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" And there is no man so poor as he who has not the bread of life. The good man would render all men happy. His charity is warm like that which beat in the heart of the Son of God, and to do his duty is his meat and his drink. This makes him like his Master, and to this he aspires. He cannot hope to rejoice eternally in the achievements of redemption, unless moved by the same pity for the miserable that he felt, he is prepared to march up promptly and offer the Savior any service he requires.

I appeal then, ye disciples of Jesus Christ, to the kindness of your heart, when I ask you to contribute to render the world happy by your wealth. Would you not cure some of the plagues that sin has generated, and that have so long preyed upon the happiness of man? Would you not quench the funeral pile, and save the young, and beautiful, but infatuated widow, that she may nurse her imploring infant, and live to rear it up to life? Would you not free one half the human family, the female sex, from that servitude for which paganism has subjected them? Would you not snatch ten thousand infants from the altars of devils, where they now lie, bound and weeping, waiting till you speak a word of mercy for them? Would you not teach the vast herd of idolaters, that there is a kinder, and more merciful God, than those they

worship? Would you not break in upon the delusions of the false prophet, and tell his misguided followers that you have read of a holier heaven than they hope for? Would you not file off the chains that have been fastened so many centuries upon poor afflicted Africa? Would you not stay the progress of war, and save from death the thousands that are marching, wan and weary, toward the field of death? O, would you not, were it possible, bring back this base world to its home and its Maker? Have you then a purse, into which God may not require you to thrust your hand, and take thence what he has there deposited, with a view to make this same world happy?

IV. *Bear with me, ye followers of the Lamb, and I will say again that you have covenanted to be workers together with God, in achieving the purposes of redemption, and must now employ your energies to widen the boundaries of his holy empire, or forfeit your vow.* It was in you a voluntary compact, and you pledged in that hour your prayers, your influence, your farm, your merchandize, your purse, your children, and all that you have. And heaven has recorded that vow, to be brought up against you, if it be violated, in the day of retribution. It was wholly at your option, whether you would enter into that sweeping covenant, whether you would swear; but you have entered, you have sworn, and cannot go back. You then relinquished for ever your personal rights, and have had ever since but a community of interest with God and his people. Now God is employed in doing good, and his people too, if they are like him. How then will it correspond with your oath to stand aloof from the calls of the Church, and disregard the command of God, and let the waste places lie desolate, and let the heathen die in their pollutions, and let the captives perish in their chains, and let almost the whole of that territory, purchased with the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, lie still under the usurped dominion of the prince of hell; and let a whole condemned world go on to the judgment with all this blood upon it unsanctified? Oh, how will your broken vows rise and haunt you, in that day when the wealth you have saved shall be weighed in the balance with the souls it might have redeemed.

Once more, and I have done. As you hope you have been sanctified through the truth, you have some experience of the value of that gospel which we urge you to promulgate. Once you were ignorant of God, and were unhappy. You were in somewhat the same for-

lorn condition with those whose cause I plead ; you had forsaken God, the fountain of living waters, and had hewn out to yourselves broken cisterns, that could hold no water. And you remember that dark period. Your mind traveled from object to object, through all the round of created good, in search of enjoyment, and " found no end in wandering mazes lost."

And there is a world of intelligent immortal beings seen panting and weary in the same fruitless chase. It was the blessed gospel that arrested you, and saved you. Your heedless steps it guided, your dark mind it enlightened, your erring conscience it rectified, your insensibility it aroused, your hard heart it softened, your selfishness it subdued, your pride it humbled, your wayward course it changed, your covenant with death, and your agreement with hell it disannulled. And here you stand, redeemed, regenerated ; your whole character changed, and your final destiny altered, through the influence of the blessed gospel. The curse is removed, you are a child of God, and an heir of glory, and shall one day see the King in his beauty ; *and the gospel has done it.* It has given you peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, a firm hope of heaven, and the soul reviving assurance, that all things shall work together for your good, till you rise to be where Christ is, behold his beauty, and rejoice in his love for ever.

Now the question is, whether you will contribute of your wealth to save those who are perishing as you so lately were. I now plead with you by all that religion has been worth to you, by all the joys it has brought you, by all the woes it has cured, by all the hopes it has raised, and by all the transformation it has wrought in your character and your condition. For what price would you return into the darkened, and dreary, and hopeless condition in which the gospel found you ? For what would you barter away all the delightful prospects that open before you ? and calculate on no more precious sacramental seasons, no more communion of saints, no more delightful hours in your closet, nor Pisgah-views of the fields of promise, nor fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ ? At no price would you part with these ? Then know how great are the blessings which you have it in your power to confer on those who are perishing for lack of vision.

Do you say, they can purchase the privileges of the gospel as you have ? No they will not. They know not their value, and will die in their sins, ere they will give a shilling for the light of the gospel. Not the whole of India, if it would save them all from hell, would support a single missionary.

Will God send them the gospel by miracle ? No, he once did thus send it to the lost, blessed be his name ! but he now commands *us to send it* to those who are perishing for lack of vision. We know our duty, and God will require it of us. Can we meet the heathen in the judgment, if we have done nothing to redeem them ?

I will plead no longer, but let me tell you in parting, that when you shall see the world on fire, your wealth all melting down, and those who have perished through your neglect calling upon the "rocks and mountains to fall on them, and hide them from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb," and shall know that you might have been instrumental in saving them, there will be strong sensations. If you are saved yourselves, and this is doubtful if you are not anxious to save others, you will wish a place to weep over your past neglects, before you begin your everlasting song : and if lost yourself, then indeed there will be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

May Jehovah bless you, and dispose you to do your duty now, that you may hereafter lay hold on eternal life.

SERMON XLVIII.

THE ENLIGHTENED CONSCIENCE UNBENDING.

I CORINTHIANS VIII. 13.

If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth.

IN the early establishment of Christianity, it became necessary to discriminate between those customs, both Jewish and heathen, that might or that might not be tolerated in the Church of Christ. In things that were *in themselves* perfectly harmless, and harmless in *their bearing*, there was no need that believers dissent from the world. In these things it was their duty to become all things to all men. For instance, Paul took Timothy and circumcised him, because it was known of all that his father was a Grecian. Circumcision had ceased to be an ordinance in the Church of God, but no law had been issued forbidding the amputation of the foreskin. Hence this might innocently be done, when it would render a Christian minister more useful; though not as an ordinance of God, obligatory upon believers under the new dispensation.

There prevailed the heathen custom of offering the flesh of the beasts they slew for the market to their idol gods, and if men made a feast the beasts were slain in honor of their idols, and then set before their guests. To these feasts Christians would be invited, and might go innocently; provided, however, that the meat on which they were to feast had not been offered to idols, or, if so offered, the fact had not been made known to them. Whatsoever had been sold in the shambles, or market, they might eat, asking no questions, whether it had or had not been offered to idols. But if any should inform them that the meat set before them had been sacrificed to heathen deities, they might not eat. And that, not because the meat had been by this ceremony polluted, or injured; for an idol was nothing at all. This the best informed believers would early know; hence in itself considered there would be no harm in their eating it. But there were some weak believers who would not have thrown off the impression that the heathen gods, whom they had before worshipped, were a kind of inferior deities, that had a real existence, and who could

not eat flesh that had been consecrated to them, without practising idolatry. Now if better informed believers, who, as to any effect upon themselves, might harmlessly feast upon these sacrifices, should do so, they would lead their weaker brethren into sin, and tempt them to apostacy. Hence they must abstain, because of the weak and unenlightened consciences of their brethren. They need not seek to be informed whether they were about to feast on a heathen sacrifice or not, for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof, and they might partake of the bounties of God without scruple. They need ask no question for conscience' sake, conscience not their own, however, but their brother's. They might eat and not sin, but their weak brother might be induced by their example to eat, and sin in eating.

Thus you have the whole case. But some of the more matured believers might say, "Why should I be judged by another man's conscience? As I know that an idol is nothing at all, and that meat offered to idols is not polluted, I will eat and let my weak brother take care of himself." Here there was occasion for the exercise of one of the most delicate principles of piety, and Paul declared that, for himself, he would eat no flesh while the world stood, if his so eating caused his brother to offend. I shall endeavor to *illustrate the conduct of the apostle on this occasion, and vindicate and apply the principle.*

He would abandon an alienable right in regard to the good of another; would care deeply for the souls that had been won to the Lord Jesus by the gospel. He considered his own conduct as contributing largely to make up the aggregate of public Christian sentiment, which should govern the infant Church. Though he could ably defend his conduct in eating the heathen sacrifices, yet many might imitate him in eating, who would never come under the influence of his reasoning, and so would be injured by his practice. It may be well to remark,

I. *His conduct did not imply that one may make another man's conscience his own guide in duty.* We are to know for ourselves what duty is, and when we know are under obligation to do it. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. There is no medium through which one man's conscience can approach and influence another, except through the medium of his conduct. If a man have any conscience, he must evince it by his deeds, and thus give it all the foreign influence it can ever have. Himself it can ever have. Himself it

can influence directly. Every man's conscience was made solely for his own use, except as it shall give rise to a conversation and deportment that may have an influence upon others. This maxim inverted was the grand error, and continues to be, in the Catholic church. The judgment of the Pope, and his emissaries, is considered paramount to the decisions of the most enlightened conscience. What the head of the church has decided is truth—however incredible, must be believed; and what he has decreed is duty must be done, though at war with Scripture and common sense. Hence there need be light in no other mind but his, and hence the Scriptures are withheld from the laity. It is of no consequence that they have a conscience, if they are not to be guided by it, but must obey the dictates of some other conscience.

Paul had no idea of abetting a principle like this. He would be guided exclusively by his own conscience, in the very practice he proposed to adopt. His judgment decided, and his heart approved the decision, that it would be his duty to live on lighter food than that which he might lawfully eat, if thereby he would bless a weak brother. That brother had no right to demand of him this sacrifice, and urge the apostle to a course of conduct not required by his own conscience. His obligation was to know for himself that the idol was nothing, and thus eat innocently, as Paul could, of the consecrated meat. Still Paul must regard his brother's good, and not make his liberty a stumbling-block to the weak. Here his own conscience bound him to a practice which his own conscience did not require of him, but for the ignorance and weakness of his brother. I think this principle is too obvious to be mistaken, while yet the apostle by no means renounces the right to be governed solely by his own conscience.

II. We are *not* to gather from the conduct of the apostle in this matter that *one* man's conscience may abridge *another* man's liberty. One man's necessities may induce another to give up his rights, and benevolence, such as the Lord Jesus exhibited when he laid aside the glory that he had with the Father before the world was, may induce him to do it cheerfully; but man may not require it of him, by any other law than that of love. If we are confident that another is misinformed, our duty is, if possible, to enlighten him; but we cannot require of him that he disregard the decisions of his own judgment, and permit himself to be guided by our opinion in opposition to his own in a question of morals. If Paul had been the only man in the infant Church who

had light enough to partake harmlessly of a heathen sacrifice, the opinion of others that he sinned in this matter would not have rendered him guilty. That weak brother, who could not do what Paul could harmlessly, might not require of the apostle that he confess himself guilty in acting according to the superior light of his own mind. You may blame me in a case in which I differ from you in my decision, for not reading and informing myself, for not being open to conviction, for not being candid and ingenuous and inquisitive; but if, finally, I cannot see as you do, and cannot think it right to co-operate with you, however you may lament my error, you cannot require me to act differently till I change my views. Thus Paul did not give up his right to decide that meat sacrificed to a heathen god might not be eaten by a Christian, harmlessly, but he relinquished the privilege of eating it because he should thus harm his brother; he retained the right but resigned the privilege. He was very tenacious of not having it understood that he was restricted by his own conscience. "What say I, then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? No." As if he had said, My conduct is not to suffer this construction. "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God; and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils." "All things are lawful to me, but all things are not expedient." Thus did his enlightened mind discriminate, and his benevolent heart correspond.

III. The apostle's conduct in this matter *does not* go to palliate ignorance. It is every man's first duty to know what duty is, to have his conscience informed, and be prepared to act correctly in all the varied scenes that may suddenly transpire before him. He does not refuse to eat the meat consecrated to devils, because he lacked that knowledge that prepared him innocently to partake; else his ignorance had been sin. He abstains because, though all things may be lawful, yet all things edify not.

His brethren, who in their ignorance, to gratify their appetites, or to please man, would not eat while they had not knowledge enough to see that they might eat to the glory of God, giving him thanks, the very meat that had been consecrated to devils, sinned through ignorance against their own souls. They provoked God to jealousy. They neglected that injunction, "Abstain from all appearance of evil," and could not have gone in the spirit of that prayer, "Lead us not into temptation." We read of men having

their foolish hearts darkened. When men do not like to retain God in their knowledge, He gives them up to a reprobate mind. He reprobates their ignorance, because resulting from choice. And how large a portion of the sins committed through ignorance will prove, at last, to be the most enormous character, the last day will tell. Paul considered himself as having sinned the most outrageously, and almost beyond the possibility of a pardon, when he sinned *ignorantly*, in persecuting the saints; hence would be the last of men to give ignorance any covering.

IV. Neither the text nor context favors the opinion that our conscience may lean in its testimony to the testimony of other consciences. The apostle did not, after being convinced that he might innocently partake of flesh that had been devoted to an idol, yield his convictions on this point, and believe that, in itself considered, it would be wrong so to do. On this point no amount of human testimony would have shaken his convictions. In the influence that the act would have on other and weak minds, lay all the danger, and all the wrong that moved him. For himself he cared not if all the beasts of the forest, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, had been devoted to some spurious deity. He could still feed upon them, and offer them in sacrifice to the God of heaven, whose is the earth and the fulness thereof. It is true, that if we find other consciences differing in their testimony from ours, it should put us upon inquiry, whether our own decision is right, should render us cautious and watchful. But when we have again and again reviewed the ground, and collected about it all the testimony we can summon, and are still conscious that we have taken the position of duty, no frowns of men, nor loss of interest, nor even death itself can move us, if we fear the Lord, to act in conformity to the views of others, in opposition to the testimony of our own conscience.

Hence the reason why the people of God have so repeatedly been denominated obstinate. Their false brethren, or the men of the world, have demanded of them what they could not conscientiously do. A Roman governor writing to one of the emperors respecting the Christians, after fully clearing them from all the charges that had been brought against them, still declares them deserving of death, because of their obstinacy. And wherein lay their obstinacy? Simply in this. They would not conform to heathen customs, when such conformity implied connivance at idolatry. They would not assemble with the worshipers of Jupi-

ter, would not put up his idols in their temple, while the heathen would readily allow an image of Jesus Christ to be erected in their temples. Thus the war began in the exclusive claims of an enlightened Christian conscience. Many a martyr was offered life, if he would bow at the shrine of Diana, or kiss the image of the virgin mother, or carry the cross in his bosom; but his choice was rather death. And it cannot be considered surprising that men who themselves have no conscience, can bend to any doctrine, opinion or practice, should pronounce this all obstinacy.

In *vindicating the principle*, from which the apostle acted, I should choose to say,

FIRST, it evinced a *deep knowledge* of the *obligations* of the Divine law. Paul did not go beyond the demands of that law. It allowed him to eat meat, even the meat that had been offered to an idol; and still it demanded of him that he yield his rights to bless his fellow-men. What, did God himself render the thing lawful, and then make another law depriving him of the very privilege he had granted? Intricate as this case may look, it presents us one of the most common maxims of Christian deportment. The property that God has put into my hands, is mine to use according to the discretion that God has given me; and still such a cry of distress may reach me as to render it my duty to devote it all to the cure of that distress. I may have barely bread enough to feed my family; but I may hear that some family is starving near me, and may be obligated to divide that bread, which is my own, and which I may in ordinary circumstances lawfully give to my children, with that starving family. I may have with me only the raiment that can warm me, and it is my own, to be used as I wish, and still a higher law may require me to divide that covering with my neighbor.

Nor does it essentially alter the case that the misery is near me, and moves my sympathy. It may be afar off, and still my perfect knowledge of its existence may render this higher law obligatory. Men need not cherish the persuasion that God makes no other claim upon their prosperity than that of being honest. Admit that this is the first claim, the second is like unto it, that we be benevolent. And how came we by the persuasion that the latter claim is not as binding as the former? If one had an estate of fifty thousand dollars, and he owed one thousand, how could he presume to count that he has forty-nine thousand to bequeath to his children, till he had inquired whether the law of benevolence did not levy its claim to five or ten thousand dollars more, previously to his de-

ciding what portion he might leave to his children? Or may one give his whole estate to his children, and leave them to discharge all his obligations of charity? If so, he should have educated them accordingly, and be sure, before his death, that he has a benevolent offspring, who will obey the law of love. Or is the law of benevolence more loose and undefined than the law of righteousness, a law that we may or may not fulfil? No. We are as strongly obligated to be benevolent, as to be honest. Paul would obey the statute requiring him to abstain from meat, if the salvation of his brother required it, as promptly and perfectly, as the statute of honesty, requiring him to pay for the cloak or the parchment he had purchased. Is it that the law of man has required honesty, and fixed a penalty to its violation, while the law of benevolence is a law of God, that men have made the distinction they have? I answer, the law of God binds the good man firmly as any municipal statute. When he says, "To do good and to communicate forget not," the statute takes hold of the conscience of the good man equally with that municipal statute requiring him to discharge the note to which he put his hand and seal.

My life is my own, and God has made it my duty to preserve it, but the case may happen when a higher law may obligate me to lay down my life for the good of others. It may be my duty, at the greatest risk, to attempt the rescue of others from death by fire or flood; or there may come again a period of the Church, when the good of Zion, the glory of God, and the advance of truth, may require the sacrifice of life. And this higher law must be obeyed. While the law of God allows us to provide for our own interest, there is in the same statute-book a law to this effect, "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." Now by what argument shall one free himself from obligations of obedience to this statute, while yet he feels the authority of that other statute in the same book, "Thou shalt not steal?"

This making the whole of religion to consist in honesty, (we will not now stop to inquire whether the sticklers for this religion are more honest than others,) is virtually denying that there is any law of benevolence; that there is any case when God himself requires us to give back a right he has given us. And yet this is the very law that governed the apostle. God had given him a right in common with others to eat meat, and even the very meat that had been devoted to an idol, but God commanded him, if his brother's good required it, to forego this right, and abandon the very privilege that had been given him by charter and by oath.

We have here, probably, one of the most wide and glaring distinctions found among the professors of godliness. There are those who obey and those who do not obey this law of benevolence. And the pretence for disobedience is, that the law is not definite. God has required me to pay that I owe; here the *debt* measures exactly the *obligations*. But the law which reads, "Lend, hoping for nothing again," leaves it doubtful how much I must lend. And that law, "Give early of thy substance to the Lord," leaves it doubtful how much we must give. And that law, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you do ye even so to them," leaves it doubtful how much we must *do* from the difficulty of deciding how much we would *have done*. And still these statutes require us to *lend* and *give* and *do*, and are as obligatory as the laws of honesty. Paul determined to obey these higher requisitions, and be governed by the law of benevolence.

SERMON XLIX.

THE ENLIGHTENED CONSCIENCE UNBENDING.—No. II.

I CORINTHIANS viii. 13.

If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth.

To have discriminating views of the obligations of the divine law, is one of the first prerequisites to a healthful growing piety. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." The renewed heart must have a relish for obedience, as far as the rules of obedience are known. And he is the wisest believer who can discern the most accurately the bearing of the divine precepts upon the common every-day concern of human life. Perhaps it would not be asserting too much to say that in the want of this is seen the grand cause why so many professed believers are of so little use to the Church of Christ. They have some general knowledge of the divine precepts, but do not take the pains they should, or have not the means that would be desirable, in learning to trace the law into its ramifications of bearing and of import. They know they should not worship idols, but do not discern when wealth, or honor, or pleasure is pursued idolatrously. They know they should not perform common labor on the Sabbath day, but do not discover exactly when their conversation or employment has become too worldly to comport with the sanctification of that holy rest. They know they should not steal, but do not discern when exactly their covetous practices or hard dealings have transcended the limits of honesty. They know they should not lie, but how often can they be seen hovering on the very line of demarcation between falsehood and truth. They may not swear profanely, but *when exactly* their hasty and passionate dialect transcends the bounds of Christian soberness, they may not be very skilful to discern. The Church have embosomed some whose language had all the coarseness and repulsion of profaneness, except that the name of God was not used.

Now nothing can be more desirable than that the Christian character be better purified. And this would be the sure result of a better knowledge of the spirit and extent of the divine precepts.

I proposed, in the preceding discourse, to illustrate the conduct of the apostle in the case before us, and vindicate and apply the principle on which he acted. I remarked, under the first particular, that he could not mean that one man should make another man's conscience his guide; nor that one man's conscience should abridge another man's liberty; nor did he mean to palliate ignorance; nor that one conscience might lean in its testimony to that of other consciences.

In vindicating the principle on which the apostle acted, I observed that it evinced a deep knowledge of the obligations of the divine law. I now observe,

SECONDLY. The apostle evinced expanded benevolence. He allowed his love to the brethren to abridge his freedom. What otherwise was lawful he would not do, if it would injure them. He acted on the broad Christian principle that he was to regard in all his conduct the sanctification and salvation of his fellow-men. He must look around him, before he acted, to see on whom the influence of his example would bear, and shape his actions, and even abridge his liberties by this consideration. He carried with him the strong and controlling impression that he was acting for the Church and for the world. His deeds were all immortal. Souls bound for eternity were all around him; and if he gave them any impulse, it must be toward the kingdom of God. For this he must give account at the last. The law of God that left him free, had a law above it that required him to be benevolent. The license to eat was modified by a precept that required him to beware lest his liberty became a stumbling-block to them that were weak, and thus souls perish for whom Christ died.

And we shall find this a Christian principle of broad and mighty application. If I have wealth and leisure, it may not be a sin occasionally to let an hour pass unoccupied; but I may not be idle in the place and in the presence of those who may be tempted by my example to idleness, and poverty and crime. If I have abundantly the means, it may not be wrong to wear better vestments than those whose idleness, or improvidence, or appetites, have clothed them in rags; but I may not set an example of that extravagance in dress which will lead others into dishonest and criminal adornings. The case may be such that a very strong necessity may require me to employ the hours of Sabbath in secular toils; but care, such as that with which I would eye the approach of death, must be taken lest my example, upon such as cannot know my necessity, may exert a destructive influence against the com-

mandment of God. I may see a man so consummately mischievous and wicked as to be justified in denominating him "a child of the devil, an enemy of all righteousness;" but great care must be taken not to deal in railing accusation. The case may occur when I may lawfully put to my lips the cup that contains strong drink; but not for a world may I do it in the place, at the time, in the circumstances, or in the presence of men who may by my example be drawn into the vortex of inebriation. I may be where vice is so bold and so supported, that it cannot safely or profitably be rebuked; but I may not linger there a moment beyond the limits of a dire necessity, lest others be tempted to abide there because they love to. I may be lawfully absent from the sanctuary or the place of prayer; but I may not, *under the price of a soul*, set the example of treating contemptuously the ordinances of God. I may see occasion to pour my rebuke upon the highest authorities of my country; but I may not refuse to submit to "the powers that be," and that are ordained of God. There may be many deeds which, in themselves considered, a good conscience would approve, but which, in their bearing upon the spiritual interests of men, conscience would denounce iniquitous. This world is governed by public sentiment; which I may not corrupt for my life. The mass of its population are moving on to hell by an impulse to which I would not add the weight of a feather for a world. A very small remnant are "straying upward," whose advance I would not retard for my house full of silver and gold. Such was the spirit of benevolence with which the apostle declared, "I will eat no meat while the world standeth, if meat make my brother to offend."

THIRDLY. There was in the conduct of the apostle in this matter a display of *great Christian magnanimity*. He acted emphatically under the impression, "None of us liveth to himself." He did not care that every act of his went to gratify himself, and exalt himself, and add some gloss to his own reputation. He could not agree to dissociate himself from the brotherhood, and be content to guard himself from danger, and leave others to spell out their own escape and manage their own defence. If *he* could go to a heathen feast and eat harmlessly, but his brother who should go with him might receive damage, or the host who invited them be sustained in his idolatry, he would not be there. Thus he headed the infant church, as some generous-hearted and brave commander, who would place himself in the edge of every battle, and be among the last to retreat, and die the shield and champion of his

warriors. Thus he patterned after his Master, who laid down his life for the sheep, who was rich, but for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich.

And the Christian spirit in all ages must be the same. When the child of God might hide himself from exposure, he may not, if his retreat would endanger his brethren. If others would defend the hated doctrines, and the self-denying duties, and handle the more obnoxious matters of discipline, and he could gain applause by *inaction*, he covets no such honor. Nehemiah would not hide himself in the temple, from the threatened invasion of his three inveterate enemies. If others would build the walls, and defend the fortresses, and watch the enemy, and his own life was ever so precious to the enterprise, still he would not lurk behind the walls, and hide himself in the sanctuary.

Believers may not take their shoulders from under the burden and leave their brethren to bear it. The spirit of the gospel has none of the world's time-serving mixed with it. If attacks must be made upon the whole army of the gods, and Jupiter should himself array the host, Paul would dare his thunders and expose his weakness, and lead the Church of God to the onset. Thus he stood in the streets of Athens, and poured out his contempt upon their priests, their shrines, and their sacrifices, till we wonder that he lived to rehearse the adventure. He knew the commander he marched under, and the goodness of the cause he supported, and the firmness of that decree that pledged him the victory.

If exposure is demanded in the cause of the Lord, the believer dare be exposed ; if courage is wanted, the Christian has it. If one has it not, he may well doubt whether he shall triumph at the last with the sacramental host. If sin is to be attacked in its stronghold, you may send any Christian to the onset. He has commenced with sin a war of extermination, and has no measure to keep with it. If the vice be popular, he cares not. If interest holds him back, he cares not. If he must go to the onset alone, he dares to meet the enemy of God and man in his deadliest assault. He dare tell a whole community by precept and example that their Sabbath-breaking will destroy them ; that their profaneness is cowardly, and vulgar, and ruinous ; that their vile cup, when it has enriched a few, and made paupers of the multitude, and murdered wives and children, and blasted their individual and civil reputation, will, in its final results, damn eternally the whole mass of its advocates, from the man who gains an office by its in-

fluence, down to the vagabond who dies in the ditch by the use of it. If sin is to be attacked, there is not a single coward among all God's elect. And if any hope they belong to that number, who dare not commence hostilities with sin, they had better know soon, that when the marriage supper is spread, and those who were ready have gone in with the bridegroom to the marriage, they must be in outer darkness.

FOURTHLY. The apostle, in the case before us, displayed *great Christian wisdom and prudence*. I know that some would suppose that the very opposite of this was true ; that if he wished to put down idolatry and convert the heathen, he must go to their feasts, and eat their sacrifices, and drink their oblations, and by no means separate himself from their society, lest he lose his influence over them. He must not push matters so far for fear of a reaction that should frustrate all his hopes. But Paul had more wisdom, and knew that in order to cure idolatry he and his brethren must stand wholly aloof from it, and thus render those ashamed who practised it. Had he attended freely their feasts, and took all his weaker brethren with him, he would have done mischief in two ways. The heathen would never have abandoned their gods, and many of the Christians would have gone back to idolatry ; and thus the whole work of founding the Christian churches would have been to be done over. Exactly thus may we prescribe for the cure of other vices. To cure profaneness, we must mingle, they say, with the swearers, and smile at their witty oaths, and invite them to our houses, and employ them in our service, and let our children hear them swear, and never let them know that we are ashamed of them ; thus they have the full benefit of our chaste conversation, and we shall occasionally have opportunity to check them ! To cure intemperance we must not be too bold in our measures. We must not refuse to drink wine occasionally, nor advise others to quit it wholly ; must not deprecate the sale of the poison, nor refuse to keep it in our houses, nor refuse to deal it out to the laborer, or the visiter, nor forbid our children to take it, nor cry down the whole article as useless, a curse and a nuisance ; all this will drive the intemperate from us, so that we can have no influence over them to persuade them to quit it ! Exactly the opposite advice that Paul would give. By such prescriptions we might keep this a drunken world for ever ; might sow the seeds of inebriation in the appetite of every child, till one generation after another shall go down to hell rapidly, as a merciful God shall be provoked to execute his law, till at length this lost world would become de-

populated and no millennial period ever come. Ask Paul to prescribe, and he would say, "Touch not, taste not, handle not."

Sin is one of the things with which we can make no covenant. It is like fire; we are scorched to death while we parley with it. Let me illustrate my views by an anecdote. A neighbor of my father's, a merchant, is said to have been in his store one evening, and snuffed his candle and threw the ignited wick into a barrel of powder. Quick as thought he thrust in his hand and took it out, but was afterward on the point of fainting when he reflected on the danger he had been in. This was told me as a fact in my childhood. Be it doubted, if you choose, still it illustrates the danger of dabbling with sin. He might not deliberate, nor ask counsel, nor proceed moderately, or he and his family had perished. Just so with sin: to parley with it is ruin, to be intimate with it is death, to abide under its power is hell.

Paul was wise in keeping no measures with idolatry. Whether to destroy it, or save his brethren, or himself, or honor Christ, was his highest object, his conduct was noble. To flee from it, and have no fellowship with it, even if he must never taste flesh while the world stood, was the very course of heavenly wisdom. He would thus render ashamed the worshipers of idols, would exert the strongest influence on the infant Church, and best honor and please his Master.

But the question will rise, Are we obligated by Paul's example? We surely are. He was teaching the truth of God under the infallible guidance of his Spirit; and whether he advances that truth in the form of exhortation, or of logical argument, or expostulation, or states the resolve to which the Spirit's influence had brought his own mind, I know of no argument by which we can repel the truth under one of these forms of instruction rather than another. I know of no sentiment more dangerous than thus to cavil at truth because taught by men we hate, or in any particular form of language. We could easily in this way destroy the influence of more than half the Bible.

And besides, there was nothing unreasonable in his resolve. There would be no danger to health or life from the entire abstinence from meat which he proposes. And the object to be gained was worth the sacrifice. And moreover, the gospel enjoins self-denial on every Christian, and promises heaven on the express condition that we deny ourselves and take up the cross and follow Christ. It would seem surprising, then, if any should doubt but that the apostle was inspired to teach the churches this high prin-

ciple of benevolence, practised at the expense of a long protracted course of self-denial. It is that redeeming principle that has saved the Church, and will save the world. Till Christians understand it, and act upon it, they have not learned the heavenly art of being useful; and if they may even hope to reach heaven, must assuredly calculate to be in that world stars of the smallest magnitude.

APPLICATION.

In applying further the principle which actuated the apostle in the case we have reviewed, I would say, in the

1. Place, That *honesty* should lead every believer to its adoption. We profess to have passed from death unto life, to have been plucked as brands from the burning. And we see those around us who are urging their way to hell, and we profess to love them. If possible, they should be stopped in their career. And if there is the most forlorn hope that our example would do any thing to stop them, our example should be employed. Else how can we be honest in our profession. If *idleness* is destroying souls, (and probably few sins are destroying more,) how can we be honest if we will not refrain from wasting precious hours with prayerless idlers, who, in the hordes that indolence collects around them, are learning and teaching the deadliest principles and the most polluting practices? And if drunkenness is destroying souls, how can we be honest in our profession of benevolence, if there is any amount of sacrifice within our power that we will not make to dam up and dry up this broad, and deep, and dark river of death, that is bearing down to hell such a mighty congregation.

2. *Consistency of character* should lead us to adopt this high principle of Christian benevolence. We profess, as Christians, that religion has a value paramount to all other interests combined. We believe that interrogatory assertion, that the whole world is not to be compared in value to a soul. Hence any sacrifice possible should be made to save a soul; and if the world see us ready to make none, will God save our character?

Believers are accustomed to pray that the kingdom of Christ may come, that men may be converted and saved, and we profess to be asking for large favors. But when we have risen from our knees, and it is seen that we can practice no self-denial to have our prayers answered, can we hope to conceal our hypocrisy? Can we have any consistency of character in the world's estimation? Will they hear us pray? Will they have any faith in our tears? No, none.

3. It will be seen, of course, that we cannot be *useful* in the *absence* of this high principle of Christian benevolence. The world honors and believes the man whose actions tally with his tears and his professions. By him they will be influenced. But they must not see us trying to escape the cross. They must not *hear* us *pray*, and then *not see us do*. We may not rebuke their profaneness, nor their Sabbath-breaking, nor their gambling, and then edge along as near as may be to the very crimes we have rebuked. We may not reprobate their intemperance, and yet drink temperately with them out of the same cup. We do them no good by our admonitions. They will wield dexterously that motto, "Physician, heal thyself." Believers should not forget that though they may have learned more than other men of Bible truth, yet in native unsanctified cunning, the men of the world are before them, and will perceive a discrepancy of character even sooner, perhaps, than themselves. "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light."

4. Without that spirit of high Christian benevolence which will lead us to make great sacrifices to bless our fellow-men, our religion will not render us *happy*. The child of God is happy in doing good. In this God is happy. When he had built the world and made man, he surveyed his works with delight, because they were all good. When we cannot reflect that we have done good, the mind corrodes itself and is put to pain.

FINALLY—We cannot be *safe* while wanting this spirit of Christian benevolence. Every soul that is born of God has it. It is that most prominent feature of the Divine image that was lost in the fall, and is restored in regeneration. "If one loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen." "Hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love to one another."

SERMON L.

THE CONCENTRATED RESULTS OF THE GOSPEL.

ISAIAH LIV. 13.

And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord ; and great shall be the peace of thy children.

IN the preceding chapter there is brought into view the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the blessed effects of his death upon the beings whom he died to redeem. "He shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied." Under that new dispensation which his mission should introduce, the barren should sing and the desolate become fruitful. The Church is directed to "enlarge the place of her tent, and stretch forth the curtains of her habitation," with the assurance of a large increase of her spiritual offspring. She shall branch forth on the right hand and on the left, shall inherit the Gentiles, shall forget the shame of her youth, and wipe off the reproach of her widowhood. Her Maker, the Lord of Hosts, will be her husband ; and the Holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth her Redeemer. "In a little wrath God hid his face from her for a moment, but will now, with everlasting kindness, have mercy on her."

This language, though highly figurative, is yet easily understood. The prophet evidently looked forward to gospel times, and sung of a period then very distant, but in its events more glorious than any that had gone by. We can easily believe that he had at length a distant but delightful view of the present period, and pleased his soul with the very scenes that are now transpiring before our eyes, when the children of the Church should become wise and happy. "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children."

That God has cast our lot in a favored period of the Church, there can be no doubt. And the man who is not thankful to see opening before himself and his children, a prospect so rich, must have a mind which none will covet, and a heart which is the seat of very sordid and groveling affections. It will be my wish, in what will now be said, to awake your attention to those objects

which Isaiah saw, and in which he exulted some twenty-five hundred years since. I would then remark,

I. The *present* is a period of *great interest*. This is a truth which must impress the mind of every thinking man. In addition to what our fathers have told us, we have learned by our own experience, that the world is undergoing a vast moral change. So rapid are the movements of Providence that we can scarcely keep pace with its present history.

1. This is an age prominent in its *benevolent exertions*. Our fathers, with all their piety, made almost no exertion to better the condition of a miserable world. They held in their hands the charter of eternal life, but made few inquiries respecting the extent to which this blessing was enjoyed. They often read the command, "Go ye unto all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," but had no idea that it was a precept binding them to disseminate that gospel on which they hung their own hopes of everlasting life. Few of us that have lived fifty years have received from our parents any lesson on this subject. They taught us those branches of duty with which they were acquainted, and put into our hands that book from which, through the teachings of the Holy Ghost, the present generation has learned one new lesson: that those who have the gospel must give it to the world.

Hence the Christian world has waked to the subject, and the benevolent heart has learned to expand, and spread its sympathies over all the miseries of the apostacy. Nor have the advocates of that charity which regards only the body, and terminates its toils at the sepulchre, any cause to mourn at the change. Since the Bible has been making its way to the habitations of poverty, it has not diminished their wonted supply of bread. He that pities the *body* may have no compassion for the *soul*, but he who aims to save the *soul* from death, will feel for the miseries of the *body*. The charity of the gospel is generous and impartial.

Nor yet have the advocates of that charity which begins at home, the least occasion to regret the exertions made in the more distant field. It was since we cast our eye upon India, and heard the moans of Africa, and saw and wept over the desolation of Palestine, that we have pitied strongly the wandering tribes of our own America, and have attempted to build up the waste places in our immediate vicinity. We had begun to translate the Scriptures into other languages, that we might export them to other nations,

before we had made the inquiry whether there were not families within ten minutes' walk of home who had no Bible. The poor in our land, and under the eaves of our sanctuaries, have reason to bless the day when the Christian world began to pity the distant heathen.

I said the Christian world had *waked*, I should have said they had *begun to wake*: for many who eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord, are yet as profoundly asleep as though nothing new had transpired. Still to some extent exertions are made to carry into effect the system of the gospel. The Bible is going into every language, and missionaries into every country, and the hope and the promise is, that soon the angel having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, will publish it to every kindred, and nation, and tongue, and people. The rich are casting of their abundance, and the poor their mite, into the treasury of the Lord. More is done now in a single year to lessen the miseries of the apostacy, than had been done perhaps in ages previously to the commencement of the present era.

And no part of Christendom is yet impoverished. Too little has been done to be esteemed a sacrifice. We have distributed to the hungry nothing but the crumbs of our plenteous board. We have done so little that scarcely a conscience in Christendom is satisfied; so little that if our children should hereafter learn the amount of our charities, they would burn the record that they might conceal our shame. Philanthropy must yet ten-fold its sacrifices, or the present generation of the heathen must almost all share the destiny of their unpitied predecessors. But when all this is said, and said truly, the present is *comparatively* an age of charity. There begins to be opened an avenue to the conscience and the heart. There is *some* pity where there has been none, there is some interest felt where recently there was indifference the most profound.

2. The present age is distinguished by a *union of interest and effort* among the friends of the gospel. Most that was done till recently was the effect of individual exertion. The pious heart was always benevolent. I should offend my readers and myself, if I should deny to our dear parents who are resting in their graves all the sympathy and the charity which they entailed to their offspring. But benevolent exertions during most of the ages that have gone by was personal and insulated. The Christian Church had not learned that union of effort would augment her strength, and multiply the resources of her charity. This discovery under

the aids of the Spirit, has produced those wondrous efforts that constitute the glory of the present era. Our Bible and education societies have contributed greatly to break down those barriers, that have so long and so mischievously separated the followers of the Lord Jesus. How consoling to see Christians while yet they are firm in advocating what they conceive to be the doctrines of truth, lay aside the rigidness of their sect, and unite their efforts to advance the interests of a common cause, and the honors of a common Master. The Foreign Missionary Society, which gives high promise of cultivating vast tracts of the moral wilderness, have set the Christian world an example, and are acting with a wisdom and an energy for which every believer in the Churches should give thanks. And that union which begins to exist at home, on heathen ground is perfect. There, we are told, the communion of each Church is open to the fellowship of others. The concert of prayer, if no other existing fact could be named, is an instance of united effort which distinguishes the present era from all that have gone by. Here is united the whole Christian Church in offering to the God of grace, the same prayer and the same intercessions. Dear brethren, whether you have or have not been happy on these occasions, you may rest assured that no feature of the present epoch yields a higher hope that the latter-day glory is nigh. God will hear the entreaty which is poured into his ear at the same moment, from ten thousand lips. He will regard those petitions, which, as that sun encircles the earth, is sent into the court of heaven from every isle and continent where dwells a heaven-born, mind. The enemies of the Lord Jesus and his Church, had never such just occasion to fear the total ruin of their cause as at the present moment. They have hitherto been able to *divide*, and have hoped by this means to *destroy*, but they now see formed against them an impenetrable phalanx by whose firmness all their boasted prowess is covered with the utmost contempt. Hence infidelity has quit the field, the Pope is palsied in his chair, Dagon prostrate before the ark, the bands of Mahomet are beginning to be weakened, the Turk is beginning to perish by the sword, and his slaves are demanding emancipation.

3. The present era is marked by that *general diffusion of knowledge* with which no former age has been blessed. I refer now to that kind of knowledge which moves the springs of action, a knowledge of the present state of the world. The groans of the wretched have been unheeded, because they have not been heard. We had no conception a few years since, that six or seven hun-

dred millions of our fellow-creatures had never heard of a Savior. We had not explored the vast tracts of moral desolation, nor had taken the gauge and dimension of human misery, depression and contempt. The prince of this world hid the extent of his dominions, and concealed the immensity of their unnumbered population, in the mists that issued from the bottomless pit. No encroachments were made upon his kingdom, because the great mass of the Christian community had never known the magnitude of his empire. Believers had long prayed, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as in heaven," but they had never conceived to what narrow limits that kingdom was confined, and of how little a portion of his promised inheritance the Prince of peace had taken actual possession.

But on these subjects there is now poured in upon the Christian community a beam of light. The vehicles of religious intelligence visit now the humblest cottage, and awaken prayer and charity, wherever the Bible, through the Divine blessing, has produced a heavenly temper. We are becoming as familiar with India, and with the isles of the Pacific, as if they had floated into our vicinity, and were in the circle of our neighborhood. The unread servant-boy peruses the records of Christian research, reads, learns the list of charity, and weeps at the funeral of the missionary. Thus is beginning to be touched every spring of charity, thus is brought upon his knees every believer that has the smallest interest at the court of heaven. And the happy result is, that the Christian world is organizing. There is making a simultaneous attack upon the various outposts of the kingdom of darkness. The widow's mite mingles with the charities of the wealthy, and hastens to constitute that river, which carries fertilization and life to the famishing population of a world.

4. The present is an era of *self-devotion*. In the ages past, if any section of the Church waked to their duty, and would have sent the bread of life to the hungry, they found it almost impossible to procure an agent who would go and dispense their charity. He must know, before he could be employed, that he should be well supported, and might soon return; that he should be under the protection of human law, and that his life should not be exposed to the paw of the lion, and the mouth of the crocodile. But God, at the juncture when they are needed, has raised up men for the service, whose minds are subjected to none of these cowardly misgivings. They offer themselves, with all their wealth, and their children. They ask nothing but their raiment and their

bread, wish never to return, have no anxiety for human protection, brave the terrors of a trackless wilderness, and can sleep sweetly in the society of beasts and savages. If thirty families, farmers and mechanics, are needed for some distant and hazardous mission, one hundred are ready. It is true that there is a lack of able and well-educated ministers, even yet, but this arises from a distressing *deficiency of the number*, and not from a *want of a spirit of self-devotion*. Thousands are wishing for a share in this work, if they can but be fitted for the service. They will pledge themselves to serve you in any country, to traverse any desert, or cross any sea, or surmount any dangers, if you will give them opportunities for preparation; and will refund your charities if their hearts faint at the service.

If the occasion would permit, I could mention, as distinguishing the present era, a number of other particulars equally interesting. God prospers, remarkably, the enterprises of his people. There is a vast increase of general knowledge, and general happiness. The bonds of slavery are breaking. The terrors of despotism are softening. The rights of conscience are beginning to be better understood. The art of war is slowly coming into disuse. The unhappy begin to know their condition. The ignorant invite instruction. The heathen are contributing to furnish themselves the means of science, and the bread of life. Infidelity is ashamed of its tenets. The governments of the earth are beginning to aid in raising the degraded and the lost to happiness and heaven. And much as the philanthropist may still find to weep over, he will descry in the present movements of the world many things that give promise of a happier age at hand, when he may wipe away his tears.

II. It is important that *our children be educated for the period in which they are to live*. If the text contains a promise, then it also points out a duty. "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord." That parent has forgotten the first dictate of affection, who does not wish that his children may be wise, useful, and happy, and who does not, by every means in his power, prepare them to act well their part in the generation with which they must mingle.

1. The rising generation should be *well instructed in science and religion*, that they may act well their part in the age that is opening. Else they can neither be useful, respectable, nor happy. The time has been, when men could have been respectable, without any knowledge of books or of science, but those dark ages

have gone by. The Bible and the tract, and the vehicle of religious intelligence, and even the voluminous commentary, are to be put into the hands of every child throughout Christendom. And he must be able to read and understand their contents, or he will wish that his father had been a Turk, or a Hindoo, and that his mother had borne him on the banks of the Caspian, or at the source of the Ganges. He will be interested in the excursions of the missionary, and must be able to trace his track on the chart, and feel the perils of his station. He must lead in the operations of charity, and must know how to minute and express his thoughts. Perhaps he must become an ambassador of the Lord Jesus, and must have his mind enlarged in the pursuit of general science. I know you intend to select his employ, he must follow the track you have chosen. No. He will choose for himself, or rather God will choose for him. When you are laid in your grave, he will hear the voice of the Lord, will be afraid to disobey, and will enter and labor in his vineyard. He will leave his plow, his trade, or his clerkship, and will go at the call of some benighted community, to carry them the Book of the covenant, and the message of mercy. And when he shall wish to be useful, if he find himself ignorant and disqualified, he will blame that father, whose memory he loves to revere, but who unkindly introduced him into an enlightened age, with an uncultivated mind.

And our daughters, as well as our sons, must be equipped for the peculiar duties of the age. The gospel has always raised the female sex to an importance which, in lands not blessed with its light, they cannot reach. It was to be expected that an age like the present would bring them into a still more important station. And they have shown their wisdom by their exertions to disseminate that gospel which has rendered them free, enlightened, happy. And they will be, hereafter, the guardians of their sex. And they must then be equipped for the service to which they will assuredly be called, and will be ashamed of their parents, if, when we are in our graves, they shall find themselves too illiterate to take an interest, and act a high and holy part, in the scenes of this illustrious age.

A parent can hardly be more unkind to his children than to neglect their improvement, at a period like the present. It would be cruel to leave them in the midst of enlightened society with minds suited to the taste of a Turk, or a Tartar. I should be afraid, in such a case, that they would hate my memory, and trample with contempt upon my ashes.

2. We must not merely attend to their *mental improvement*, we must teach them charity. The suffrages of Christendom have been taken, and it is resolved that the miseries of the world must be relieved. But this relief will cost us something more than "Be ye warmed, and be ye filled." We are pained, and so will be our children, if we or they must know of miseries which we may not alleviate. While the eye is pouring forth its tears, the hand will distribute its bounty. But in this matter much will depend on habit. We could give you the names of men who have prayed, "Thy kingdom come," with great fervency this half century, but have never, perhaps, given the price of a Bible to aid the increase of that kingdom. And now, when the claims of the perishing millions are understood, every such prayer they offer is their disgrace. Our children must be taught to be consistent. If they will need mental improvement, because they are to live in an enlightened age, they will no less need a spirit of Christian benevolence, because they are to live in a *liberal* age. Hence, while they are mere children they should be taught to cast their little mites into the treasury of the Lord. When they read the pathetic story of a burning widow, or an immolated babe, or a suffering missionary, tell them, while the tears are flowing, that they must send those heathen a Bible, and contribute to the support of that missionary. Carry them with you to the monthly concert, and enrol their little names upon the list of charity: thus will you prepare them to fill some distinguished station among their enlightened and liberal contemporaries. They will be pillars and polished stones in the house of the Lord, and will do you honor when the weeds shall be growing upon your sepulchres.

But if our children should carry into manhood the opposite character; should they be ignorant, and covetous, and infidel; should they set themselves to oppose the work of the Lord, and dam up the streams of charity, and exhibit a dark, and contracted, and illiberal spirit; as sure as God is true there is nothing before them but disappointment and shame. They will cover our graves with reproach, and attach a stigma to our name which will adhere to it till it has perished. In the conduct of the child the world will read the character of the parents, and the dead will be arraigned and condemned at the tribunal of the living.

The means of avoiding this doom are in our hands. Let us make our children acquainted with what God is doing, let us put into their hand and pour into their ears the weekly intelligence, and water the advice with prayer, and then, whether we live to

see the effects or not, our children will rise up and call us blessed. But,

3. They must have the benefit of our example. If we are found opposing the work of the Lord, are unwilling to be enlightened, and are vexed at every solicitation of charity, we shall have children in our own likeness, and they will live only to prolong our disgrace. But if we march up to the work of the Lord ourselves; if our children hear us pray earnestly for the devoted missionary, and see us afflicted when we have missed any opportunity to give of our substance to the Lord, and glad when opportunity presents, and generous in our contributions; they will naturally imbibe the same spirit, and we shall be honored, and God will be served in our offspring. If we are afraid that a course like this will render us poor, and injure our children, it is either because we lack the necessary information, or doubt the truth of the promise. It is plainly written and easily understood, "Give early of thy substance to the Lord; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses burst out with new wine." Now what parent that believes this text to be the word of the Lord, would not rather, far rather, that his children could have a claim to this promise, than any possible human security for the stability and the increase of their fortune? It affixes to every bond we hold the seal of heaven; secures the timely shower, the prosperous breeze, the wisdom necessary to plan our concerns, and the happy combination of circumstances, in every hour when we shall need the interference of a heavenly friend.

Let us, then, leave our children a well-selected library, a mind well cultivated, a conscience awake to duty, a heart habituated to feel the woes of another, and, depend upon it, our estates will be more secure, and our offspring better provided for, than, if we should leave them with the opposite habits, in the possession of a kingdom.

Do you say, none but God can do all this for our children? True: and all that is required of us is, that we wish it done, that we entreat him to do it, that we set the example and use the means required. Then if our children will not be obedient, we can have peace in death, and the curse of being their destroyer, will be removed from our shoulders. But we need have no such fears. The frequent and extensive revivals with which God is blessing the churches, gives encouraging promise, that from among the rising generation there is to be selected an army of combatants, who are to march under the captain of their salvation

to victory and glory. There is more hope that our children will be saved, than there has been, with respect to any generation that has ever inhabited the globe. If this is the period predicted in the context, and there are many indications that it is, then the promise is, "Thy children shall *all* be taught of the Lord." Or if this prediction is not to receive its *full* accomplishment, till the lapse of a century, still its *partial* accomplishment may be the inheritance of our children.

III. *The course described will render them happy.* "Great shall be the peace of thy children." The evident indications of Providence are, that there has dawned a new era of the Church. If then we do our duty to our children, set the example and enforce the precepts required, our hope may be that they will be among the ornaments of the risen and rising generation. They will go into life with habits suited to the sphere in which they are to act. They will associate with a benevolent community, will have a delightful employ, will witness most glorious displays of the wisdom and power of God, and will doubtless have those communications of the Spirit which create the best possible enjoyments of a rational mind. If these hopes are not all a dream what a blessing it now is to be a parent. When our hearts have ached for our children, how such a hope would have cheered us. If they may live and act worthily amid the scenes of such a period, it is quite enough. AMEN.

SERMON LI.

THE BRIDGELESS GULF.

LUKE xvi. 26.

And, besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed : so that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot ; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

THE evident meaning of the text is, that the rich man could expect no relief from heaven. Not only could Lazarus bring him none, but none could be brought. There was no communication between the two worlds. They were forever separated by an impassable gulf ! and whether its bottomless caverns will ever be filled, or a bridge erected, I shall, at present, leave those to guess, who venture to doubt the plainest text, who dare to die in their sins, who hope to reach heaven by the way of hell, and who hang that forlorn hope upon a straw.

Two points the parable settles : that the wicked shall be punished, and that they shall be punished after death. The rich man had received his good things. Now the beggar receives *his* ; and the gulf that separates them is impassable. Christ did not make Abraham say that the rich man had received *part* of his good things, and that the gulf was not passable at *present*. We seem to be taught the irreparable loss of his soul. To say the contrary is to charge Christ with using a figure calculated to deceive, and this is to blasphemously impeach his truth and his goodness.

Christ would not have represented the rich man as dying, and *then* lifting up his eyes in torment, if sinners were not punished *after* death. Nor would he have represented him as separated from the smallest comfort by an impassable gulf, if there were any possible relief for those who once make their bed in hell !

And those who deny, that there is any hell but the grave, will gain nothing, when they understand this parable. Be it the grave or not, the rich man found it a place of torment ; a place where sensitive beings enjoy no comforts, not even a drop of water to cool their tongues ; a place partitioned off from heaven by a gulf impassable. I will here stop to quote one or two texts more, to show the weakness as well as wickedness of supposing that the Scriptures recognise no other hell but the grave. " The wicked

shall be turned into hell," and so will the righteous, if this sentiment be correct—for the righteous, as well as the wicked, commonly find a grave. He who does not cut off a right hand and pluck out a right eye that offends, is in danger of having his whole body cast into hell. But if hell be only the grave, the whole body must be cast thither, whether the offending member be amputated or not. We read, that God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell. Did any one ever suppose that the revolting angels were buried in the earth? Who that has common sense, and can use it, ever thought of putting spirits in a grave? Besides, we read of the fire, the brimstone, the darkness, and the torments of hell! Can this hell be the grave? My dear hearers, I cannot spend your time to confute an error so weak. Its advocates must be left to their own stupid infatuation.

I shall proceed to inquire, whether the miserable inhabitants of hell have any hope of relief?

I. If their endless punishment is not revealed in the Scriptures, it could not have been. I mean by this remark that every varied form of words and expression is used in the Scriptures, to express this idea, that could be. After the process of the last judgment, the wicked are to go, accursed, into everlasting fire; where they are to be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. And where the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever; and where they shall be tormented day and night, for ever and ever. The words here used, are declared by the most approved lexicographers in the Greek and Hebrew languages to mean *eternal*; having no end. The same words, and others like them, are used in many texts, to express the duration of the miseries of the damned. And if they do not express endless duration, there are no words in those languages that do. And can we believe that they who used those languages had never received the idea of an eternity, or if they had the idea, had no words with which to express it? If then, the Deity, in revealing his will, made use of the strongest words which human language afforded, to express endless punishment, and yet has failed, how *could* he have revealed this truth if it had been truth? It seems impossible, unless he had adopted some other mode of making known his will.

I cannot stop, brethren, to hear the quibbling of those, who, although they acknowledge that the fire will burn for ever, believe that the wretched victims will be released. It is as frequently

and as strongly expressed, that the finally impenitent shall be punished for ever, as that the fire shall for ever burn. And it would be impeaching the character of God to suppose, that he would feed the flames of Tophet, while there was no employ for its fires. "Their worm shall not die." "They shall be tormented day and night, for ever and ever."

But as to the main doctrine—what would men have had him say, that they might believe it? If he had said, "They shall never escape from hell, would they believe him? This he has said. The very name of that place of misery indicates, that there is no escape. It is called a prison. "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." And as prisons are not usually left unbarred or unlocked, so we hear Christ say of this prison, "I am he that liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore; and have the keys of hell and of death." And to secure the prisoners still more, they are reserved "in chains under darkness." Their place of abode is also termed a pit, a furnace, and a lake of fire. These terms imply a place of fearful confinement. The text assures us that an impassable gulf confined the rich man in this perdition.

Had he said, they shall never reach heaven, or be in the place where his people are, and where he is, would this satisfy those who who try to doubt? This he has said. "Sinners shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous." "The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Christ said to some of the Jews, "Ye shall die in your sins; whither I go ye cannot come." And in another place he says, "Where I am, thither ye cannot come." And the text again bars the finally impenitent out of heaven, by an impassable gulf. "They shall never see life, but the wrath of God abideth on them."

Had he said, Sinners shall never be forgiven, would this have given satisfaction? This he has said. Said the Lord Jesus, "He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." And we read again, that to those who sin wilfully, after they have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. It is predicted, that those who regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operations of his hands, he shall destroy, and not build them

up. This does not look like restoring sinners to happiness after their sufferings. This would be building them up. But God intends to destroy them and not build them up.

God threatens sinners that he will destroy them with *double*, with *everlasting*, and *perpetual* destruction. He intends to consume them in his wrath. He intends to make them a perpetual desolation. They are destined to die the second death. It is the divine purpose that they shall perish forever. He intends to blot out their names forever. They are to be the subjects of endless despair. They are to weep, and wail, and gnash their teeth. Such will be their hopeless and miserable state, that they shall seek death, but death shall flee from them. These expressions all look like irrecoverable ruin. And if the Bible does not teach this doctrine, it is of all books the most difficult to understand. Instead of being that simple, intelligible book, which I have always conceived it to be, I despair of learning one truth from it. I would sell it for the fraction of a cent, and abandon myself to the fortuitous light of unintelligent nature.

II. If the punishments of the wicked are not endless, we have no security in the Scriptures, that the saints will be for ever happy. Each truth rests on the same species of evidence. The same words are used, and the same form of expression in both cases. God has sworn that the one shall live and the other die—the one be destroyed, the other saved—the one redeemed, the other damned! The one is to go away into everlasting punishment, the other into everlasting life. The smoke of the torment of the one is to ascend up for ever and ever, and, co-extensively with it, the other is to cry, alleluiah! Not a text can be found that more strongly expresses the duration of heaven's joys, than the miseries of hell. The Christian's hopes, then, of immortal blessedness are all a dream! He may yet learn the dreadful secret, that after tasting the joys of heaven, he may suddenly sink to the bottomless pit, and some fiend of darkness rise and fill his seat. And let Gabriel know that the prince of darkness, whom he thought to be an out-cast forever, may yet walk with him, arm in arm, through the streets of the New Jerusalem, and he, perhaps, be sent to fill the infernal throne! When men embrace such sentiments, they scatter firebrands, arrows, and death; and give them their wish, they fill the middle and the upper world with tears

III. If sinners are to be released from punishment, it must be on

the principle of *mercy*, or of *justice*. Let us view both sides of this question.

Are they to be saved, finally, by *mercy*? Does this idea comport with the sacred Scriptures? According to Matthew, sinners are to remain in the prison of hell till they pay the uttermost farthing. Or, as Luke has it, till they *have paid* the very last mite. They are also to suffer *as much* as their sins deserve. They are to receive the due reward of their deeds. They are to drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out *without mixture*, that is, without mixture of *mercy*, into the cup of his indignation, and are to be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. Now, if they are to pay the last mite, if there is to be no mixture of *mercy* in their cup, and if they are to suffer the due reward of their deeds, how can they be saved by *mercy*? When one has paid the debt, is there any *mercy* in giving him his discharge? Does not *justice* demand his release? If the hour ever comes when sinners shall deserve no further punishment, will not all hell rise in one united band, and press into the court of heaven, to sue for their immediate discharge, on the principle of right? And will a righteous God deny them their suit?

Do any feel disposed to take the other side, and advocate the sinner's final emancipation on the principle of *justice*? Then let this matter be fairly viewed. The Scriptures represent salvation as the result of *mercy*. "By grace we are saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God." To this point is the whole tenor of Scripture. By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified.

Grace is to be the theme of the heavenly song. The redeemed of the Lord shall for ever praise him who washed them from their sins *in his blood*. Now if any should finally make their way into heaven, whom *mercy* has not redeemed, they could never join the song, or if they made the attempt, there would be endless discord.

Besides, brethren, when the sinner shall have suffered all that he deserves, and *justice* demands his release, it is absurd to speak of his being saved. From what is he saved? Not from deserved punishment, for no punishment is deserved. If any can have so base an idea of God, as that he would continue to punish sinners after they have ceased to deserve it, then we might conceive of their being saved from the effects of tyranny. And then indeed it would be absurd to speak of the sinner's being saved by the same

hand that still wished unjustly to punish. If any then imagine that all will reach heaven at last who have fallen under the wrath of God, let them not speak of them as *saved*. There can be no salvation but for those who are exposed to ruin, and when they have paid the uttermost farthing, sinners are no longer exposed. And yet who ever thought of any reaching heaven but those who are saved by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Neither on the principle of mercy or of justice, then, is there any redemption from hell. And who can conceive of any third principle as a ground of reprieve from the pangs of the second death ?

IV. Salvation is represented as being through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth. But did we ever read in the Scriptures, that the Holy Spirit should descend and operate upon the hearts of the damned ? And is hell a place where men are likely to come to the knowledge or the love of the truth ? Under his tuition, who is a liar and the father of lies, can we hope for such effects ? I have no doubt but that those who enter the place of misery hoping one day to make their escape, will there learn one truth, which they are so unwilling to learn here. They will learn, to their everlasting cost, that till then they have always believed a lie. They will learn that he who has the keys of hell will never unlock their prison. In this truth their faith will then be strong—everlasting.

V. The Scriptures represent *Christ as the medium* of salvation to all who reach heaven. There is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved. But Christ will have done his work of salvation before any are redeemed from hell. We are taught that Christ must reign till he hath put his enemies under his feet, and that he shall then deliver up the kingdom to his Father. This passage is worthy of particular remark. Christ delivers up the mediatorial kingdom, immediately after he has sentenced the wicked to everlasting fire. After this period there can be no Christ to redeem them. He has then gathered in his elect, and gone to seat them at the marriage supper, and has left his enemies to contrive a way of salvation for themselves. The finally impenitent are not given to Christ, for those who are given to him shall *never perish*, neither shall any one be able to pluck them out of his hands. But those who go to the place of despair *perish*, and therefore are not given to Christ and will not

be saved by him. Thus the argument chases the sinner down to hell and leaves him there, with no Savior to redeem him. How he shall be able, unassisted, to burst its bars, or quench its flames, or quit its caverns, I leave those to guess who dare run the dreadful risk.

VI. The finally impenitent die with a wrong temper of heart, and must undergo a thorough change of temper and character, or there could be no salvation for them. Indeed it would not be salvation were they taken from the place of torment but left in possession of their evil hearts of unbelief. Salvation consists in being saved from the dominion of sin. Those who are rescued from hell then, must first be made holy. Now it would seem very strange that God should send them to that polluted world to acquire purity. Hell, it seems, is the school where men are qualified for heaven, and he their instructor who was too vile to live in heaven!

Can we believe that the flames of the pit will have any tendency to purify? Afflictions in the present world make wicked men no better. "Why should they be stricken any more, they will revolt more and more?" The merest wretches that ever appeared in the shape of men, have been those who had been subjected to almost perpetual affliction. And it would seem as though every stroke made them more stubborn. And why should the rod of divine wrath have a different effect in hell? That men will for ever grow worse in that world I can believe, but to believe that they shall grow better, requires credulity which I do not possess.

And the decree of Heaven with regard to them is, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still, and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still." Evil men and seducers wax worse and worse. Men are to perish *in their iniquities*, and there is neither promise nor intimation that they shall ever be cleansed. How then can they ever be qualified for that world where nothing impure shall ever enter?

VII. We read that wicked men are to have their portion at last with devils. "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." If then they are ever redeemed, their associates in misery will doubtless be redeemed with them. But we read that Christ did not take upon him the nature of angels nor die for them. Devils have no share in his blood, nor any hope of emancipation through his merits. This question was long since settled. They must remain in their chains, and there is full

reason to apprehend that men will for ever have their part with them in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.

OBJECTIONS.

I feel it my duty to answer a few of the more specious objections to this doctrine. The more common objection is that drawn from the mercy of God. The argument is, that God is too benevolent too inflict so sore a punishment on his creatures. It seems they are afraid to admit the idea of endless punishment lest the sentiment should tarnish the divine glory. If they are sincere in using this argument they will manifest their sincerity by holiness of life. They will make it their constant effort to obey, and have others obey, the divine law. And if we do not see this, we shall doubt whether they oppose the doctrine we advocate, from respect to the divine character. But be their motive what it may the argument is flimsy. It is founded on this hypothesis, that it is more important that God should appear merciful than that he appear holy, just, and true. God is good, but he will forever hate those who are filthy and polluted. God is good, but he is so just that he will render to every one according to his works. God is good, but he is so true to his word that every threatening he has uttered he will execute. If then any are saved, in their salvation mercy and truth must meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other. We are incompetent to say, what divine goodness operating in unison with the other attributes of Deity may do, or what it may refuse to do.

In this world some suffer all their life. From the cradle to the grave they hardly draw a breath in comfort. And these unhappy sufferers are not always conspicuous for wickedness. We see infants suffer from the day of their birth till they find an early grave. Now if all this is consistent with the goodness of God, it may comport with the same goodness, to leave those, who have spent all their lives in sin, and gone down to hell in unbelief, to suffer for their sins for ever.

Besides, brethren, mercy must have some channel, through which it may flow out. While God pardons rebels he must still maintain the dignity of his character, and must support the honor of his law and government. And the Lord Jesus Christ is the only medium of mercy from God to sinners. Him the wretched sinner has rejected till he gives up the mediatorial kingdom. Hence there is no channel through which mercy may be communicated to the inhabitants of the pit. God will remain merciful and gra-

cious for ever, but his mercy will avail those nothing who have dammed up its streams.

Much is made of that text where Christ is said to have gone by his Spirit, and preached to the spirits in prison. It seems impossible that any one should have gathered from this text that Christ went and preached to the inhabitants of hell. When Peter wrote they were spirits in prison : but he does not say they were when Christ preached to them by his Spirit. Indeed, we are assured that this took place at a time when once the long-suffering God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was preparing. During this time, that holy man, inspired by the Spirit of Christ preached to them, and they continued disobedient. Now they are spirits in prison.

For argument's sake, let us suppose that Christ did go and preach to the inhabitants of the pit. What would he preach? Doubtless the same doctrines which he preached on earth. He would demonstrate to them that the fire should never be quenched, nor the worm die. He would assure them that they should by no means come out thence till they had paid the uttermost farthing. He would repeat to them the divine decree, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still." Could he contradict what he had preached to them on earth?

Provided he did preach to them the same doctrines which he delivered on earth, what would be the effect? Would those be profited by his preaching there who rejected him here? Would those who perished from Nazareth be any better pleased with divine sovereignty and election, than when they led Christ to the brow of the hill to cast him down, because he taught these doctrines? Would those who condemned the Prince of life, those who platted the crown, and those who drove the nails, and then went down to hell—would they now choose him as their Redeemer? Have the flames of the pit melted the hard heart? Shall we wait till men have known the bitterness of being damned, before we recommend Christ to them? Brethren, have any tidings reached you from the pit? The preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ—what effect does it have in the infernal prison? Does any revolting spirit ground his arms? Are any hosannahs to the Son of David heard to resound through the vaulted caverns of hell? My brethren, falsehood is inconsistent with all truth, and always finds its way beset with contradiction and absurdity. Embrace the truth, and it is consistent and can be defended without an effort.

Much is said about Christ's descending into hell, and great exertions made to prove that this is the only hell. It is true that the same word sometimes means the grave, and sometimes the place of misery. It is worthy of remark, however, that words are used in the latter sense not used in the former. The grave is never called a lake of fire, or a furnace of fire, or a place of outer darkness. If we should admit, what is not true, that *sheol* in Hebrew, and *hades* in Greek, mean nothing more than the grave, we should lose nothing. The question is settled in texts where these words are not used.

And what if it could be proved that Christ descended to the bottomless pit? There was a divine promise that his soul should not be left in hell. The wicked have no such assurance. He is not there now.

If Christ went to hell, it is not said that he went to redeem its prisoners. We are not told that he bore home to heaven with him any of the spoils of hell. We are not told that he conveyed thither a drop of water to cool the parching tongues.

Much is said of Christ's restoring all things, and destroying the works of the devil. These texts, they say, settle the point that all will be saved. It is surprising how men will reason when they have first resolved how they wish a thing to be. Suppose a rebellion break out in a human government, and some brave general be sent to restore order, would this imply the indiscriminate pardon of all the rebels? If he should imprison some, and execute others, and intimidate others, so that the rebels grounded their arms and forsook the standard of revolt, we should say that order is restored. So Christ must reign till he has put all his enemies under his feet. Then he is to give up the mediatorial kingdom to the Father. There is nothing said about his pardoning them all. Every knee shall bow to him; but it is not said that every enemy shall be brought to love him. A conquered enemy bows to his conqueror. Every one shall confess him to be Lord; but it is not said that all shall love him, and elect him as *their* Lord. His enemies shall feel and confess his power, and be trodden under his feet. During his reign they shall be cast into prison, and he, as Mediator, will go out of office, leaving them in bonds. The works of the devil are destroyed when his plan is frustrated, his hopes cut off, his emissaries ashamed, and his kingdom demolished. His works are destroyed when he and all his coadjutors are safely secured in hell. Then order is restored in the divine gov-

ernment, and is the better secured if some are made the everlasting monuments of his wrath.

Much is made of those texts where Christ is said to be a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, where he is called the Savior of the world, and where he is said to be the Savior of all men. The evident meaning of these texts is,

That Christ died for men and not for devils; for our world in distinction from any other.

That he died for sinners of one nation as well as another; for Jews and Gentiles.

That he made an atonement adequate to the pardon of all men; so that whosoever will may come and take the water of life freely. And

That he does save from temporal evils, and from present deserved wrath all men. Through the merits of Christ, the basest of all men are allowed a probation, are kept out of hell while the offers of pardon can be made them, and they have opportunity to form their character for eternity.

In connection with these texts, we find woes and curses denounced against those who reject Christ, making it manifest that finally all will not be interested in his blood. The context in each verse limits its meaning. For instance, in that text where Christ is said to be the Savior of all men, it is added, "especially of those that believe." Now if all, believers and unbelievers, are to reach heaven at last, how could Christ be in any special sense the Savior of believers? But if all men are saved by him from many temporal evils, and believers from eternal misery, the text is plain. And provided honesty and prayer be our commentaries, the other texts are equally plain.

Instead of sinners being redeemed from hell, the dreadful probability is, that their miseries will endlessly increase. That they will continue to be disobedient and refractory, there is no room to doubt. Restraint being removed, they will doubtless feel and display more desperate wickedness than in the present life; and we cannot believe that God will release them from obligations to obey and love him, because they have become less disposed. The same law which is binding on us, will be in full force in hell. If, then, God continue to mark iniquity against them, and to punish that iniquity, their torments must for ever increase. And this doctrine we seem to be taught, when we are told that death and hell shall be cast into the lake of fire. Instead, then, of their prospect brightening, it will darken. The clouds that hover round the pit

will become more and more impenetrable for ever ; as often as they raise their eyes their hopes will sink. This dreadful point I will not press.

Now, my readers, if I have advocated the truth, the saints will love it ; but if I have advocated error, those will love it who know not God and who obey not the gospel. This is always a fair touchstone of truth. Whatever sentiments we embrace, if we would recommend them, we must do it by a holy life. On whichever side of this question the truth lies, there will be seen the most holiness ; for truth has a sanctifying influence, while error has the contrary effect. Several instances have happened within our day, of men murdering themselves and their families, having first embraced the opinion that all would be happy beyond the grave. I confess I feel afraid of sentiments that can so steel the heart, that a man can embue his hands in the blood of his children. And if you please to term these extreme cases, look at those which are common. Where do you find the most religion, the most benevolence, the most humility, the most prayer, the tenderest conscience, the most meekness, and the most heavenly-mindedness ?—in those who embrace, or in those who reject the doctrine of unlimited punishment ? Where you see these effects, there is truth ; and where there is error, these effects are not seen.

SERMON LII.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD THE GLORY AND THE GUIDE OF HIS PEOPLE.

EXODUS XXXIII. 16.

For wherein shall it be known how that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.

AFTER the disgraceful affair of the golden calf, which resulted in the death of three thousand of the men of Israel, Moses as usual interceded with God that he would forgive and would still love his people. God at length so far regarded his intercessions as to say that Moses might still lead the people to the land of promise, and added, "Mine angel shall go before thee." But to that man of God this was not enough, and he still interceded that *God himself*, and not a created angel, might guide him to the promised rest. From this last and inimitably eloquent plea we extract the text: "For wherein shall it be known how that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth."

Finding himself so far successful, Moses was not yet satisfied, but asked permission to see the divine glory. And God, having put him in the cleft of the rock, and covered him with his hand, made all his goodness pass before him and proclaimed himself gracious to whom he would be gracious, and merciful to whom he would show mercy. Here we might stay to remark, that the glory of God is his goodness. Moses asked the Lord to show him his glory, and God made his goodness to pass before him. We might remark again, that goodness never appears so inviting, as when exhibited in the shape of grace and mercy. And further, that God is a sovereign in these exhibitions of his glory. He will be gracious to whom he will, and will show mercy to whom he will. We might learn too from the context, that in our present state we cannot bear a full view of the divine glory. When we ask God to show us himself, we may well beseech him to first cover us with his hand, or hide us in the cleft of a rock. It is more

than probable that even in heaven we shall not be able to bear the full exhibitions of his nature ; but we shall see him in the Lord Jesus. In him there will be such a softening down of the burning glories of the Godhead that we may see him with open face. But we must proceed to a particular consideration of the text.

How would it be known to the nations bordering upon Israel that they had found grace in the sight of God, unless notwithstanding their sins he would still go before them, and conduct them to his rest. His presence would render them a distinct and separate people, and would mark them out as the Lord's peculiar inheritance. In what will now be said the text will be considered as applicable not merely to that people, but to the people of God in every age. The doctrine which I shall attempt to illustrate is this :

The presence of God with his people distinguishes them from the world, and thus becomes the best possible evidence of their adoption.

By the presence of God we are to understand the manifestations he makes to them of his glory, the views he gives them, and the correspondent affections of heart which he draws out toward himself, his government, and his kingdom. The real believer who has known the pleasure of these manifestations will ask for no further explanation. He has adopted it as his dialect in his closet, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me, and has felt the pleasure of saying afterward, Thou hast put gladness into my heart, more than when their corn and their wine increased. There is no believer who is not acquainted to a greater or less extent with the joy that God's presence gives, who has not at times been alone, and found God in the place of retirement, and can understand us when we speak of the believer as being with God, and enjoying God. On this point then I shall not enlarge, but proceed to show how the presence of God operates to distinguish his people from the world, and how this distinctness is evidence of their adoption.

I. I am to show how the presence of God with his people operates to render them *distinct from all other people* ; "So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth." We easily see how all this was literally fulfilled in the case of Israel. While God led them through the desert by the pillar of cloud and of fire, and was present in the tabernacle and afterward in the temple to respond to all their petitions, to guide and light them in the way, to protect,

and feed, and cheer, and comfort them, we easily see that there could be no people like them. Egypt and Babylon, and Syria, and Philistia had no such guide and protector. No power, strong to save, and wise to guide, marched in the van of *their* multitude, and spread over them the wing of his protection and mercy. All their deliverances were by might and by power; but Israel had only to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, or when they went forward had only to follow the cloud that moved before them. Hence every foe was afraid of their coming, and every danger kept its distance till they had reached the place of their rest. Thus they were rendered a separate people, and the presence of their Lord was a wall of fire round about them, and the glory in the midst of them. And the Divine presence distinguishes his people now.

1. By *elevating* their views. It is the glory of man that he is an intellectual being. He was not born like the brute to be the mere slave of appetite, and at best the child of instinct. He can perceive, and think, and reason, can contemplate on the character and works of his Maker. But the apostacy threw him down from this elevation, and tended to make him a reptile as well as a rebel. It rendered him disaffected to the objects, that it was his elevation and his honor to contemplate. It excluded God from all his thoughts, and put in his place the creature he had made. Hence would you survey every thought of the ungodly, and trace every track of the mind, through its devious and degraded course, you would find it exhausting all its energies in low and debasing thought, thought whose highest objects are material, and whose highest flights do not transcend the starry heavens, and seldom rise so high. It holds more generally the tenor of its way, amid the appetites and cares and woes of a dying body. Hence its paramount concerns are, what shall I eat, and what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clad, and how shall we obtain wealth, and honor, and influence? How shall I become the greatest among my fellows, and the leader among my equals? How shall I chase away want, and care, and fear of death? With thoughts like these, all low, and sordid, and debasing, the mind labors till the smiles of God invite it upward. Even when partially sanctified, if God hides his face, and there remains nothing to look upon, and nothing to contemplate but created objects, the heavenly mind of necessity must become sordid and torrene. The Christian forsaken, is but a worm or mole, and must feed on dust and ashes.

But the presence of God elevates the mind. It rises when he is seen, to higher and better thoughts, and finds and breathes a sublimer, purer atmosphere. The Christian has sometimes been afraid to live, lest he should lose the heavenly vision, and become again an alien and a slave. He has shunned the society of his dearest friends, as in a sense beneath his elevation, and incapable of sharing in his pleasures. He has viewed his Christian brethren as too darkened in their views and too sordid in their taste, to climb with him the Pisgah, where he surveys the fields of promise. Now this is the only employment where the mind can be said to be at home, and be furnished its legitimate occupancy. The man assumes in such an hour the attitude he held in Eden, when all the beauty that bloomed about him was viewed as but the mirror in which he saw distinctly his Creator :

“These are thy glorious works, parent of good;
Almighty! this thy universal name :
How glorious these, thyself how glorious then ;”

and is led to cry in the same elevated language,

“Give what thou canst, without thee we are poor,
And with thee rich, take what thou wilt away.”

Hence, only during these happy periods, does the *mind* find its native, sublime, and dignified employment.

2. The presence of God with his people gives the *heart* its noblest, happiest employment. Man is not merely qualified to think nobly, but to feel nobly. When his thoughts are properly employed, if the heart does not feel corresponding affection, more than half the man is still enslaved and miserable. True, it seldom, perhaps never, happens, that the man is thus divided, half a tenant of the upper world, and half of this. Men may think of God philosophically, and may find the subject of their thoughts elevating and pleasant. But if, while the mind converses with God, the heart is hard, and cold, and sordid, it cannot rise to any very great elevation. It may speculate about his attributes, and names, and operations, but in its sublimest flights, all that makes heaven glad is hid ; all that angels see, and admire, and adore, is covered with the veil of night. Hence said one of the best of men, “An undevout astronomer is mad.”

But when God is present with his people, he does not suffer them merely to stand and philosophize about the exteriors of his being. They look upon him without a veil, and are happy. The

eye affects the heart, and draws out into active and delightful exercise, its strongest and its best affections. God, who is seen, is loved supremely. All his attributes are lovely, and his name is lovely, and his law is lovely, and his kingdom lovely. He would have the view continue for ever, and if it might continue would be satisfied. He gains in such an hour his best ideas of heaven, and when the vision is fled, and he would think of heaven, he endeavors to recall what he felt in that hour when his faith was strong, and God was nigh. Indeed the Christian is furnished from these seasons with his best, his happiest contemplations, and often experiences the benefit when the period of his joy is gone by. They go to form his character, and to render him a distinct man, from the best of those who have never enjoyed such delightful seasons; which leads me to remark,

3. That the presence of God with his people tends to form and mould them to *uprightness of Christian deportment*. I know there is a rapturous glow of religious joy, which is mistaken for the Divine presence, but which bears no heavenly fruits. When the rapture ceases, it leaves the man proud, and vain, and selfish. He compasses himself about with sparks of his own kindling, and walks in the light of his own fire. He imagines himself the favorite of heaven, as he could not else have been admitted to see, as he terms it, the Divine glory.

Now, when the soul has been with God, the effects are precisely the opposite of all this. It renders the believer humble. We cannot see God, without discovering by contrast our own true character :

“The more thy glories lure my gaze,
The humbler I shall lie;
Thus while I sink, my joys shall rise
Unmeasurably high.”

No apostle appears to have been admitted to more intimate views of God than Paul, yet none was humbler. Many of those expressions of lowliness, which have enriched the prayers of God's people in all ages of the Christian Church were uttered by him who had been caught up into the third heaven, and had seen things that were unutterable. He was ever after less than the least of all saints, was not meet to be called an apostle, and was heard to cry out, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death.” The same will always be the effect of seeing God. “I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear,

but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Ezekiel and John, when they saw God, fell on their faces. Hence a sight of God will not fail to render our deportment humble.

It will also produce deadness to the world. Uncover to our view the glories of a better world, and this must fade and lose its brightness. How mean and poor will appear the enjoyments and the interests of the present state, to one who has held, if but for an hour, uninterrupted communion with God. Nothing that is seen and temporal, can have any glory or any worth afterward, that can be deliberately compared with what was seen in God. Hence there will be a suppression of covetousness and envy, and of all the passions that grow out of them, and the deeds which these passions generate. Hence, when you meet with one whom nothing but gain will satisfy, who will cry after his gains, as one did when he missed his idols, "Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more," you may presume, without much fear of mistake, that he has never tasted of that joy of which we have spoken. He has seen no better things than those that are earthly and sensual, and they have become his supreme good. Moses would not wish to stay in the wilderness, after he had climbed Pisgah. Nor would Peter and John, after they had seen transfigured the Lord Jesus, have any wish to quit the place.

The presence of God generates a heavenly mind, makes every thing earthly look small and insignificant, and tends to render the man a pilgrim and a stranger. Hence a life of godliness, a course of conduct that has supreme reference to the life to come. The man becomes so changed, that the world takes knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus. He cannot enter again into all the little cares and quarrels that previously engrossed his mind.

4. The presence of God inspires *pure and heavenly hopes*. There must sit a gloom upon the brow of impenitence, when there is any thought. The impenitent man who is happy and who covers his face with a smile, while there hangs over him the wrath of God, is an object of painful contemplation. Not that there is any virtue in despair, or any merit in gloom and melancholy; but how can he be happy who casts his eye along the track of life and sees awaiting him ever, the horrors of the death-bed, and all beyond is the blackness of darkness forever? And there can be but little hope of a better doom till God has smiled upon the soul. Then there are generated high and heavenly hopes. The mind argues thus, God would not give me these comforts merely to render me

miserable. He would not thus lift the veil that covers eternity, and show me himself and some of the glory that surrounds him, and then shut those glories up for ever from my view. As reasoned the wife of Manoah on his suggestion that because they had seen God they must die, "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands: neither would he have showed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these."

Thus every believer will argue, when he has evidence that he has experienced true Christian joy, has seen the reconciled face of God. He will say within himself, God has not done all this in anger; it cannot be in his heart to thus render every earthly scene dull, and raise my hopes of what he will one day do for me, when he has no such kind intentions. Should a prince, who had power to choose his successor, but had no heir to whom it was expected he would bequeath the throne, call some beggar frequently into his palace and put on him the royal vestments and the crown, would he not gather the hope, and gather it legitimately, that the prince intended that one day he should wield a sceptre? Else why tantalize him with the investiture of the royal equipments? And if God never intends to bring his people to heaven, why give them these foretastes of his glory? Why lift up upon them the light of his countenance and put gladness into their hearts, such as cannot be created by the increase of corn and wine, when no favor is intended him beyond what earthly objects can produce? Thus the presence of God inspires hope; scatters the gloom that hangs over the mind; and casts upon the prospect the light of life. The good man becomes of course a cheerful man. He can pass through many a dark scene joyful and happy. He has songs in the night, and is thus made to differ from all others.

Thus the presence of God with his people, signalizes them by elevating their views, by furnishing the heart its noblest, happiest employment, by moving them to uprightness of Christian deportment, and by inspiring pure and heavenly hopes.

5. The presence of God with his people, distinguishes them by *enlightening and sanctifying their consciences*. There is probably no point in which God's people differ more from the world than in the superior sensibility of their consciences. I know we meet with numerous instances where there is a profession of godliness, but a total destitution of moral sensibility, but I know too that in no such case can there be the grace of God. He who does not aim to have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward

man, manifests that he neither understands the law nor the gospel, nor has felt the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. Nor can there be a doubt but the presence of God with his people tends, more than all other things, to put right this power of the soul. Sin has disordered its judgment, and unbelief keeps it disordered. But when God is nigh, and is looking into our inward parts, then conscience can be heard, and will speak, and her sentence will be according to truth. And when this happens *often*, there is found the habit of correct judgment. And conscience will carry her faithful news into the dark hour. We have seen the apostate, who really never did enjoy the presence of God, still very wretched, because he had come in contact with truth and had imperceptibly learned what is duty. And we have always seen the backslider miserable because once he did approach near to God, and when there had his conscience corrected by the law and the testimony. Hence he could never wander so far as to forget wholly what once he knew of truth and duty. It is true that as he wandered his conscience became less and less sensible, and would at length, but for the covenant faithfulness of God, have been seared as with a hot iron. With the apostate this often becomes the fact, though probably not always in the present life. But the believer will have a conscience more or less correct in proportion as he walks with God. You never knew the case when the believer had been spending the Sabbath in near communion with God, when he could spend the evening in a light and trifling manner. You never saw him come warm from his closet and wrong or backbite his neighbor. When you see him worldly, and forgetful of duty, proud, contentious, envious, or idle, you know assuredly that he has had no communion with God that day. When you see in him on any occasion a want of regard to duty, you infer infallibly, that he has been for some time without any visit between his Savior and his soul. Show me the man who has just quitted his labor to go alone and pray, because he could not wait the ordinary season of retirement, and that man will not speak wrongly, or deal unmercifully with his beast. Show me any two men who are contending, and I can predict with certainty that one of them at least is not thirsting for God, for the living God. There is a total and unchangeable dissonance between communion with God, and all iniquity. Bring up the conscience, as it is brought up in an hour of spiritual enjoyment, to a close contact, to a strict and rigorous comparison with the testimonies of the Lord, and its prompt and, if necessary, desperate fidelity will bear unequivocal witness to the

truth that God has, while it was near to him, stamped upon it his own impress. And it will often wear the image it has received, when the memory of that season of fellowship has almost fled.

II. That all this is *evidence of their adoption*. "Wherein shall it be known how that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth."

I use the word *adoption* without the wish to force this upon you as precisely the thought sustained in the text. If you please, substitute *repentance*. The idea is, how should it be known that the family of Jacob were God's peculiar people, his inheritance, but by their distinctness of character and conduct from all others. Perhaps adoption is a term as suitable as any other. Their distinctness of character becomes evidence of their adoption, by the peculiar characteristics of that distinction.

The Mohammedans are a distinct and peculiar people. They have a system of laws that bind no other people, and a form of ceremonies and a mode of propagating their faith such as no other people have adopted; but all this is no evidence that they are the people of God. And I might illustrate the same truth by other comparisons. Hence, if we find a people who are like no others, this, by itself, will prove nothing respecting their relationship to God.

But we mark in the people of God, as the surrounding nations did in the Israelites, a distinctness that is evidence of their adoption; it consists in their conformity to the will of God. The Jewish family had their laws from heaven. In all their movements they made inquiry of the Lord, who gave them immediate direction, and thus signalized them from any people who had ever crossed that desert, or had ever been known or heard of in that age or country. Men had carried their idols with them, and had repeated their sacrifices and their prayers to gods who could neither hear, nor speak, nor save. But no people, till Israel journeyed to the land of promise, had ever been led day and night by a pillar of cloud, and found immediate guardianship and protection whenever they were in straits and difficulties. But if God were so angry that he would not accompany Israel, their peculiarity would cease; the nations would see that they were not defended nor guided, and would fall upon them and make them an easy prey. God could only testify his love to them, and his care of them, by continuing his presence and his glory in the midst of them. This

Moses saw and felt, when he prayed, as in the text, "Wherein shall it be known how that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth."

So that peculiarity in the people of God, which the ungodly see, and which it is desirable they should see, in every age, consists in their conformity to the mind and will of God. They rectify their consciences and their lives by the Scriptures, practice the duties it enjoins, cultivate the temper, and form the habits, and speak the language it teaches. And no farther than this is the case, have they evidence to themselves, or can give evidence to others, that they are the people of God.

The men of the world have the Bible in their hands, but though they believe it to be the word of God, they feel themselves disinclined to model their character after its precepts. Hence, if they see about them a people who in this respect differ from them, who make it their chief concern to obey the precepts of the Lord, and form a character after the pattern given in that holy book, it is inferred from this peculiarity that they are the people of God.

They would not thus regard the Divine precepts, but from dutiful respect and affection to their author. Many duties are enjoined that are unpleasant, that require self-denial, that curb the appetites, and restrain the passions. Men are commanded to deny themselves, to take up their cross, to crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts, to return good for evil—but duties like these can only be pleasant where there is a spirit of obedience, where there is love. Hence, if any man distinguishes himself from the men of the world, by his obedience to the Divine precepts, they infer from this singularity of character, that he loves God, reveres his authority, and esteems his favor a high and distinguished blessing. They are entirely conscious that they feel no such regard to the authority of God, and make no such estimate of his friendship and his love; and very naturally infer, from the conduct of the dutiful Christian, that he has a different temper from that which they possess themselves. Thus the singularity of the believer, when it consists in his obedience to God—and there must be this obedience, or there can be no evidence of faith—becomes proof decisive to all about him that he loves God, and is a member of his family.

When men have practised singularities that God has not enjoined, and have thus calculated to do him honor, they have but covered

themselves with shame. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." "For he that in these things serveth Christ, is accepted of God, and approved of men." God has not specified how his children shall feed, or dress, or walk. He has appointed them no unmeaning ceremonies, by which he would have them designated. He has not required them to wear a breastplate, a cross, or a crescent. He has not enjoined a coat of sackcloth, nor a veil, nor a sad countenance, nor torn garments, nor lacerated limbs. By no such means may men become singular, and suppose that they are thus doing any part of duty. But in obeying the commandments of God, it is their duty to differ from all who are not obedient, and to differ in this respect as widely as possible. Would to God that no believer, from this time till the last day, would, in one single case, neglect a duty, or be guilty of a deed forbidden, to please or conform himself to the men of the world. If they please, let them pronounce us rigid. To be rigid in duty, should be our choice; it is the only way in which we can bless the world by our example, and certainly is giving the highest possible expression of our love to God.

While in this respect we are seen to be a distinct people, we not only give evidence that we love God, but that God loves us. It is well known that men are not by nature disposed to obey the Lord. They do not love himself nor his law, and their language is, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Such is known to be the native character of every man. Now, if from a race of beings who are thus hostile to their Maker and their duty, it is seen that God has chosen to himself a people, and made them willing in the day of his power, is giving them his law, which they cheerfully obey, it becomes manifest that God loves them, and has adopted them, and is sanctifying them, and will finally bring them to his kingdom. As they become more and more unlike those about them, they become more and more like God. He instamps upon them his own image. Christ is formed in them the hope of glory. Thus the singularity of God's people is evidence to the world of their adoption.

REMARKS.

1. We see *whence* we are to gather the hope that we are believers. We are to obtain that hope from the same source, in a measure, and in a great measure, from whence others are justified in entertaining a hope respecting us,—our unlikeness of character

and conduct from the character and conduct of the men of the world. It is true, that the people of God have *Christian feelings*, which of themselves is evidence that they are the children of God, "the Spirit bearing witness with our spirits that we are the children of God." But while all this is true, it is also true that our feelings need themselves to be tested, whether they are genuine Christian feelings. There are feelings that are mere enthusiasm, which yet engender a strong, but ill-grounded hope of eternal life. But we have in the subject before us one sure criterion of the genuineness of our feelings. If they are Christian feelings, they will lead to the formation of a character, and the exhibition of a conduct wholly distinct from the character and conduct of the men of the world. They will operate to render us humble, and watchful, and prayerful, and heavenly-minded. They will render us meek, and patient, and benevolent, and merciful.

We see in many professors of godliness, notwithstanding much that is considered piety, certain things which bring their piety into doubt, certain principles, which, notwithstanding their apparent zeal, casts a cloud upon their godliness, and conforms them to the men of the world. We have seen ambition, and pride, and vanity. There are certain men in every country, and in every age, who can never be edified but where they can be conspicuous, where they can be leaders. We can always anticipate their opinion of any plan, by observing where it will place *them*. We have seen envy operate to render those unhappy who profess to love the Lord Jesus, when others had more attention, and were more honored than themselves. We have even seen some of the noblest Christian enterprises defeated by the jealousies of, as we hope, God's people. We have seen, and have often seen, mingled, the hottest zeal, and the spirit of slander, the *warmest* prayers, and the *coldest* charity. Thus the spirit of the world has gone into a warm profession, has approached the very altar, and has cursed the sacrifice.

A religion that does not transform us into the image of Christ, should never be the basis of Christian hope. We may have changed our associates, and in a measure our employment, and still may wear essentially the same character as before. If we are unlike the world, we shall see the contrast as well as others. We shall have at hand every day the means of judging whether indeed "we are risen with Christ, and are seeking those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." And in the mean time, the world will take knowledge of us that

we have been with Jesus; and though they may cast out our names as evil, will yield us that highest honor, the honor of being in some measure like him. And we need not then fear but God will make us happy, our hope will be strong, and our Christian consolations many. God will graciously guide us by his counsel, and afterward receive us to glory.

2. Would believers be useful to those around them, it must be, not by becoming like them, but *unlike* them. In this way only can they give evidence that they have enjoyed communion with God, or that they are in the habit of holding fellowship with him. But it not unfrequently happens, whether from a desire to be useful, God knows, that Christians endeavor to become conformed to the maxims and the spirit of the world. They have been known to say, and perhaps they have believed, that by putting on the character and imitating the conduct as far as might be, of ungodly men, they could be the more useful. But has it so happened? When the believer has gone with them to the place of rendezvous, did he restrain them, or did they corrupt him? When he took the social cup, did he teach them to use it temperately, or they him to become intemperate? Did his presence there make them ashamed of sin, or did they soon render him ashamed of his Savior, his piety, and his prayers? Did he render their consciences so disturbed that they quit the place, or did they render his so callous that he gave them no molestation. Did he finally lead them to the sanctuary, or did they tempt him to lounge away his Sabbath upon his bed? Did they accompany him to the place of prayer, or did they bring him at length to vacate his own seat? Did their characters finally conform to his, or his to theirs? That passage then in the history of Paul has been perverted, in which he says he became all things to all men that he might gain some. It cannot mean that he endeavored to conform his character to the character of the ungodly that he might save them. It can mean nothing more than that he adapted his arguments to the people he would save. When he reasoned with a Jew, he would reason with him out of his own Scriptures, and when with the Athenians he would argue from the language of their own poets. •

No, brethren, when we would do good to ungodly men, we must aim at as wide a contrast as possible between ourselves and them. If they are light we must be sober minded, if they are profane we must pray, if they curse we must bless, if they are worldly minded we must be heavenly minded. Thus every deed of ours is useful to them, and thus only when we differ from them exactly when

they are at issue with the law of God. Were this the fact with every professor of godliness, sin would not thus be justified by our example and every transgressor would feel himself reprov'd by our conduct. Their own consciences would then do their office and they would blush at their own impiety. We should then hedge up their path to perdition with thorns, and should render the way of transgressors hard. They would see our good works, and many of them, we hope, would be induced to glorify our heavenly Father. They would take knowledge of us that we had been with Jesus. They would see, that as in so many instances in which we differ from them they are wrong, they are probably wrong in every point of difference.

3. The subject shows us in what light we are to view those Christians and those ministers of religion who make it their great aim to break down all distinction in appearance between godliness and ungodliness. They look for no change, and wish for none in those who are admitted to their communion, and they have been heard to say that regeneration is all a dream. It often grieves them when they see awakenings, and they sneer at the alarms of such as have gained some view of their real condition, and have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them in the gospel. They would have the man who has begun to put his trust in the Lord, keep on him all that belonged to him as a man of the world, and be as vain, and gay, and sportive, and prayerless, as when he stood in the ranks of death. They have their motive in all this. They would hope for heaven themselves, while no change of heart and life has even rendered them dissimilar from the great mass of the ungodly, and they would have the real Christian act like them, that they may have the better ground to hope, that in the end it shall be well with them. But their souls are lost if believers act according to their wishes, as they are then confirmed in all their delusions.

4. The subject shows us that a *discriminating* gospel is the *only useful* gospel. If the truth is exhibited so indefinitely, that men never learn their own characters, they never will see the necessity of a *change* of character. Men must know what they are, and what God requires them to be, else there is no hope "that the gospel will prove to them a savor of life unto life." The whole design of the gospel ministry is to take a people from the world, and make them wholly *unlike* the mass from which they are taken, and train them up to that familiarity of character and conduct which God requires. Its *first* and *its last* lesson to believers must

be, "We are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, that ye may show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." And when the gospel loves this peculiar feature, it loves all its worth. When it allows men of all character to hope for heaven, the praying and the prayless, the humble and proud; the world-loving and the heavenly-minded; the temperate and the dissipated; the attendant upon God's worship, and God's ordinances, and the Sabbath-breaker, the gospel then becomes as the Koran. It even becomes in such circumstances the savor of death unto death; seals in eternal slumber the eyes it should open, sears the conscience it should enlighten, and hardens the heart it should sanctify. It becomes a soft harmonious lullaby, under which men slumber more profoundly than if no accents fell upon the ear. It would be the policy of all who give any credit to the Divine testimony, to wish a gospel that disseminates, and cutting off every false hope, urges on the Christian to every affection and every deed, by which the man of God is commanded to distinguish himself from the mass of the ungodly around him. It should catch from the lips of the Lord Jesus that saying, "Be ye followers of me as dear children," and that other saying, "He that is perfect shall be as his Master."

5. We see the imperious duty of Christian Churches to render their enclosures sacred. A Church is of no use as a light to lighten a dark world, if that Church embodies the principles of the world, and imitates its examples. Let one profane man live un-reproved and undisciplined in a Christian Church, and that Church as such cannot be said to bear testimony against profanity. Let there be one drunkard there, and they bear no testimony against intemperance. One adulterer, and they bear no testimony against fornication. One swindler, and they do not testify against dishonesty. One who deserts the communion and the sanctuary, and they nullify the very ordinances which are the seals of their fellowship. One who denies the doctrines of the gospel, and they virtually give up their creed and their covenant, the basis of their union. And then what is the use of a Christian Church, when it bears no testimony against sin, and when it has no character distinct from the world? Why enclose a few of the inhabitants of the world with creeds, and covenants, and sacraments, if no reason can be offered why *they*, rather than *others*, should be embraced within these enclosures!

But would any Church of Christ render itself useful, its course is plain. We must purge *ourselves*, and watch and purge our

brethren, till our character differs, and we are separated from all the people who are upon the face of the earth. Then and not till then will our light shine before men, "that they seeing our good works may glorify our Father which is in heaven." We are not to forget what we have covenanted. We have engaged to come out from the world and be separate; to deny ourselves all ungodliness, and every worldly lust, and to live soberly and righteously and godly in the present evil world. We have vowed that we would follow the Lord wholly; that we would take up our cross and follow Jesus; that we would crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts, and being risen with Christ, would seek those things that are above where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. And to faithfully perform these vows, both as individuals and as a Church, is to claim our constant vigilance, and should employ our daily prayers. May the Lord continue his presence with you, and thus distinguish you from all people, and make it known that you have found grace in his sight.

SERMON LIII.

THE GOSPEL RECLUSE.

PSALM LV. 6.

Oh that I had wings like a dove ! for then would I fly away and be at rest.

WHEN a sentiment like this originates in spleen, in disappointed ambition, in the reluctant subjugation of a proud mind, it is wholly the result of depravity, and is unlovely. One may be sick of the world because the world is sick of him, and may wish to retire from its noise because he cannot enjoy more of its confidence, its honors, and its wealth. He sees in himself a merit that others do not discern, a worth and a greatness, where others behold only pride and vanity. Hence generally a charge of ingratitude, a want of discernment, knavery and villany, all because he has not the place he has *assigned himself*, a seat higher than others are willing he should occupy.

Now a spirit like this deserves only contempt, not sympathy. It is the sorrow of the world that worketh death. If the man has no humility it would seem he might have discernment enough to put himself in his proper place.

Now there was nothing of all this in the mind of David, when he uttered the sentiment of the text. He was sick of sin, and tired of witnessing the conduct of wicked men, and would absent himself from the busy scenes of life if he might, because he longed to quit his contact with moral pollution. He was tired of violence, oppression and wrath, of scandal and strife, and deceit and guile, and hypocrisy. The comforts of social life were, for the time being, overbalanced by the miseries it produced, and he would quit the one if he might fly from the other.

To distinguish nicely between these sensations and those which are the result of mere dejection, is of great practical importance. To wish an asylum from moral pollution, and shut our eyes upon wrong, is a gracious affection ; but to be discontented with our lot, and vexed with the world because it will not love and honor us, is but the paroxysm of pride, and vanity, and ambition. And if the two exercises are closely examined they will not be found to

resemble each other very minutely. He who would retire from the world because of its moral pollution, and the consequent abridgment of its comforts, is still active in making it better. He weeps over its miseries, and prays earnestly to heaven for that sanctifying influence that can heal the plagues which afflict it. He would by no means retire from the world, if he can do anything to make it better. He would not quit the post of duty, nor spend all his energies in complaints and frowns and despondencies. He would mingle with the world just enough to apply to its plagues, every remedy in his power, for its comfort and its cure. While the man of mere discontent cares not, if he can be happy himself, if every woe he witnesses should prove incurable. He wishes only a rest for his own spirit. If the world would only honor him, and love him, it might remain as miserable as sin can make it, and not a tear would drop from his eye.

I. It will be my object in what follows *to notice some of the things that afflict the good man and contribute to render him sick of the world.* "O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away and be at rest." If he be a man of enlarged mind, he casts his eye over the world, and surveys at one view the whole surface of its desolations. It is a world that God built for the advancement of his glory. There are scattered over it wondrous monuments of his wisdom and his power. It rolls with other worlds, which have not like this become disobedient, and like them is lighted and warmed and moved by the hand of God. But sin has rendered it a vast wilderness. On its surface it wears marks of the curse, which we cannot believe could be traced on other planets. Much of it is a stormy ocean, and much of the residue an uncomely and fruitless wilderness, from which heaven withholds its showers, or has given it up to be the prey of darkness and frost, and storms; where roam the beast of prey, and where lurk the deadly reptile, raging with hunger and armed with death.

But all this, dreary as is the prospect which it presents to one who would have God honored in all his works, is nothing compared with the moral desolations which are seen at the same glance. The *intelligent* population of this world has become apostate, and has covered it with a deformity more disgusting than its oceans, its storms, its deserts, or its beasts of prey. Three-fourths of its population have made no effort to become acquainted with their Creator, will not even use the light that shines around them, and worship, instead of God, a beast or a block. They know not that

any part of them is immortal, and make no provision but for the life that now is. Thus the mind is lost, and the vast tracts of idolatry, as to any praise that God receives, might as well have been the exclusive territory of the ape and the owl. Then we should have had before us a less afflicting view. But the heathen are *depraved* and *miserable* and yet *immortal*. Intelligence, when it becomes alienated from its author, proves an engine of misery. Beasts of prey cannot be as wretched as men. Hence the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty. The heathen delight in devouring each other. Their wars are perpetual, and bloody and desperate. Their forms of religion are about as cruel as their wars. Their human sacrifices outdo in frequency and horror our utmost corruptions. Prisoners of war are offered to their infernal deities or devoured as delicious morsels. Females are *en masse* a band of slaves, children are destroyed at pleasure, and the sick exposed to perish by their nearest friends. Thus heathen lands, except when there is some special counteracting influence, can only have at best a sparse, and cruel, and miserable population. But to the man of faith this is not all. The heathen have souls that must live for ever, and enough of God can be known from his works, to render them without excuse for not loving and serving him. Hence we shall see them in the judgment, and shall see every final idolater condemned. Wretched then as they are in this life, there are more consummate miseries for them in the life to come. For the invisible things of God from the creation are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.

Hence when the good man, surveying the scenery about him, casts his eye to the limit of his landscape, how gloomy must be his contemplations. He sees six hundred millions of the population of the globe, immortal like himself, and like himself pressing on to the judgment, but ignorant of the way of salvation, and destined by the plainest testimony of Scripture to persist in their forgetfulness of God, and, on their way to ruin, employing their intelligence to render each other as miserable as possible. How gloomy to the good man is such a prospect! How can he fail to recognise, in the millions of the miserable, his brethren and his kindred, and how can he suppress the wish that he could quit a world so disloyal and reprobate? He will be doing all he can to lessen the woe he laments, but when all he can do is done, there will remain so much misery as to make him sigh for a better world; and he will

involuntarily utter the language of the text, "O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest."

I have embraced among the heathen the followers of Mahomet. We cannot contemplate those sections of the earth, overrun by the men of that religion, with emotions any less gloomy than those with which we survey the heathen world. Their character is so universally savage and their religion so bloody, as to even place them among the most forbidding of the human race. All Mahomedan countries are the seat of war, robbery, assassination, slavery, and crime of every hue. They constitute one broad empire of ignorance, iniquity, and death, where reigns the prince of darkness in undisturbed and appalling sovereignty. Every man holds his life by a very frail tenure, from the monarch to the menial; every mind is dark, every heart totally polluted, every conscience misinformed. Light is put for darkness and darkness for light. Their hope is a lie, and the heaven they expect a paradise of polluted, sensual, and beastly enjoyment. Hence no territory is surveyed with more disgusting and horrid sensations.

But when the good man limits his view to the fields of Christendom, still is there much in his prospect to fill his soul with pain, and make him sigh for a lovelier world. There are parts of Christendom where religion has not produced the blessedness it might. Their religion is concise, and dark, and dubious. It fetters the intellect, the conscience, and the affections, clouds the objects of Christian attachment, and casts a horrid confusion and uncertainty upon every object of faith. Upon all Catholic countries it cannot be denied, that there shines merely the twilight of revelation. God committed to them his word, but they have so corrupted its light, that they have become afraid of the sacred book, and have committed it to the flames. Hence many districts of Christendom are about as dark as pagan lands, and can be said to have only the appendages of the gospel; and their population, instead of being guided to heaven, are lost and bewildered amid the mazes of an awful and complicated superstition. From these darker shades religion emerges, till in a few small districts she is seen to enjoy her freedom and her beauty. Thus Christendom itself presents a dreary aspect, and is lighted rather by a taper than by the Sun of Righteousness.

Hence much of this sacred territory is an almost continued scene of quarrel and of blood. The badge of authority is the sword, and men are made decent and subordinate by the fear of death, rather than by the laws of the Lord Jesus. An armed force

protects the king, and gives efficiency to the laws and the magistrate. Nations professedly Christian can draw the sword upon one another, and either army, as God shall give them the victory, return to offer praise in his sanctuary. Could the heathen know all this, how could they be persuaded to believe our religion from heaven? What, *the Lamb of God*, the author of a religion quarrelsome, and bloody, and pitiless.

Nor can even this be said to be Christendom's foulest stain. There comes a curse from Africa upon all her fields, for having carried her sons into bondage, for having bred war in her bosom, for having crimsoned the sea with the blood of her children, torn from their parents, and borne like beasts to the market, to die by plague or famine, or what is sometimes considered worse than death, to bleed under the lash of a task-master till sufferings and toil consume them. If a few sections of Christendom have begun to wipe off this blot, it still is seen to adhere, like leprosy, and cries to heaven for judgments. God will avenge a deed that has begotten so much pain, that has spread so wide, and has so long protracted its cruelties and its misery.

But all this must distress the good man. Must he trace the very territory to which there is due from heaven a storm of wrath? Must he walk the streets, and sleep on the very ground where a righteous God will yet avenge iniquity? How can he fail to enter into the views of the Psalmist, and long for the wings of a dove, that he may hasten his escape from the windy storm and tempest.

But the good man need not look so far to see cause of pain. He may limit his view to his own country, and still wish an asylum from the pollution and the misery that lie spread out before him. The men at the head of our government, it is to be feared, are very few of them men of piety. We hear of their splendid balls and parties, but when did they once meet to unite their prayers in behalf of their country? A few of them may be at the place of worship on the Sabbath, but how many spend that day in mirth and festivity? What is there about the hall of legislation to remind a stranger that its inmates are the representatives of a Christian people, a people in the midst of whom God is their glory, and about whom he is a wall of fire? If there should come down upon us a storm from heaven, who would turn his eye to the general government, as the place whence there would ascend the prayers that might avert the calamity? When men are selected to fill the highest offices in the land, who does not know that reli-

gion constitutes no part of their qualification? not to say what I fear is true, that religion would rather tarnish than adorn the candidate. We remember the occasion when it was long a question, and at length determined on the side opposite to justice and mercy, whether we would extend the privilege of holding men in bondage, to territories where the curse had not gone. And yet we are a Christian nation, and profess that our territory makes every man free, and gives all equal rights. But why might we break the bond that bound us to our mother country, and still hold our fellow men bond-slaves for life? Their right in us was the right of power—the right that the sword gives, not heaven. And what other right has any in his slave?

I remember, too, that the laws of the United States justify a disregard of the Sabbath. The mail, with all its noise and retinue, may disturb on its route every house of worship, and carry its noisy and profane, and God-provoking influence into every village, and that by the direct authority of the general government, and in contempt of hundreds of thousands of petitioners who have preferred their prayers till they have no hope of success.

Thus from the very spot whence should issue none but the laws of piety and righteousness, where should be congregated the men who would rule in the fear of the Lord, whence there should go out a commanding Christian influence, to operate through all the parts of an extensive and complicated legislation,—from that very spot there flow out streams of moral putrefaction, to contaminate, as far as heaven will permit, the whole body politic.

Let the same principles that are supreme at the seat of government, go to regulate the social intercourse of all our cities and villages, and it is impossible not to see that we should be a miserable people. If one chances to violate the laws of honor, or is conceived to have erred, he can wipe away the reproach only by the exposure of his life. He must stand a mark for the fatal ball, or be dubbed a coward, and lose his character. Thus when the blackest crimes should receive their *punishment*, they find a pattern; where should prevail *wisdom*, originates the most consummate folly; where should be generated the *laws of kindness*, there issues a permit to any man, who will do it honorably, to spill the blood of his neighbor and his friend. Thus the heart faints and sickens when it should receive its strongest and kindest impulse, and the good man turns from the seat of the general government, as from a scene too disgusting to contemplate. Its palaces are splendid, its equipage costly, its fare sumptuous, its assemblies

large, and gay, and brilliant, but God is scarcely acknowledged there, and there reigns throughout all its circles, a lightness and a vanity that is the very antipode of heaven. And when we leave the spot, and look upon the servants of the general government in their varied dispersions, our disgust is very little diminished. We cannot say that integrity, or piety, or wisdom, has received very largely the honors or the emoluments of the general government. There has not prevailed a disposition to employ those servants, that we should employ to administer upon our estates, or that we would wish might be the guardians of our children. There have been, I know, some good men in the general government, and they have employed some servants and ministers, who have acted in the fear of God, but the mass, I believe, it will not be denied, have not been governed by the fear of God. And still they are the men of our choice, and this is the most painful thought, for the sin lies at our own door. We rise from our knees, and hand in our suffrage for the man who never prays, and would consider himself insulted, if one should urge him to the duty. Thus the good man is disgusted, and wishes to soar away and be at rest.

And as we pass down through all the subordinate branches of civil government, our prospect is not very greatly cheered. Enmity to God and his kingdom is not considered a disqualification for managing the best interests of civil society. The men that hate the Law of God, profane his name, and will not keep his sabbaths, nor honor his sanctuary;—it is confessed we do not consider the interests of a Christian community very safe in their hands.

Is it asked whether we would make piety the test of office, we answer, no. But we would have other qualifications. We would have every man in office fear an oath, and not deliberately swear to do a duty which he has already resolved not to do. We would have him a man whose conscience is enlightened by the testimony of God. We would, that he regarded the Sabbath, and would not converse profanely, would be the friend of morality, and science, and religion. We would not have him intemperate, nor impure, nor infidel. We would have him respect the name of God, and the people of God, and all the institutions of religion. Less than this in the men of office ought not to satisfy a Christian community.

But as the good man surveys the civil government, how little of all this does he sometimes discover in the men of office. They are often the *patterns* of vice, and often more yet its *patrons*. They will swear themselves into office, by pledges they never

afterward think of, and which, at the time of the oath, they mean not to redeem. They are often found the enemies of the Church, and of the truth, of the Sabbath, of the sanctuary, of revivals of religion, and the whole code of Christian morality. Hence how long have good men petitioned and prayed, till they have quit praying, that such amendments may be made in the laws that guard the morals of the community, as to secure their execution, but all to no purpose.

Now, in view of all this, how can the good man fail to wish that he may live in a better community, and be governed by men that have a conscience, and act in the fear of God? How can it please him to commit the temporal, and, to a great extent, the immortal interests of his offspring, to the rule and the authority of men who have no impressive sense of their future accountability. A lodge in the desert, where nature only can be seen to rule by the fixed laws of God, and vice is banished, offers him an asylum that has many charms above the partial misrule of unsanctified authority.

When the good man takes a view of the churches, he has still occasion for pain. He sees often a lackness of discipline, that tarnishes their beauty, weakens their strength, mars their fellowship, and greatly retards their usefulness. Men of ungodly life are suffered to eat the children's bread; men of profaneness, in temperance, and debauchery; men who neither pray nor repent, but cast their whole weight into the scale of error and irreligion. So slow is the work of discipline in many churches, that men are constantly dying in their communion, who have been notoriously ungodly for years; and of whose piety there never was indulged a hope. There are among the professed people of God contentions, backbiting, envy, and wrath. They sit down together at the table of the Lord, and covenant to love one another, but their vow does not bind them. They can exhibit toward each other every unkindness witnessed among the men of the world. Now who would not desire a better world than this? Who, that dares to be alone, would not covet a lodge in some vast wilderness, that his eyes might not see a world which the Lord Jesus built for himself, so polluted and destroyed? Who would not wish to belong to a better community, to be conversant with wiser men, to enjoy a more kind and friendly society, and have fellowship with a more pure and godly brotherhood? "O that I had wings, like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest."

We have noticed what occasion the good man has to utter the

sentiment of the text, when he takes some of the more extended views of the objects around him. And we shall find that his disgust continues when he narrows the rule down to himself.

If he casts his eye over the town in which he dwells, he can seldom fail to see what must disgust a heavenly mind. The varied shades of political and religious sentiment, the party feelings, the jarring interests, the prejudices and the quarrels, are calculated to render one very sick of human life, and if they beget not the wish to quit the world, will render endeared the scenes of retirement and meditation. There is too little seen that deserves the name of friendship. Between very few is there a compact so firm, that the most trifling affair of interest will not sunder the fellowship, and create envy and strife. Every public measure, though the most useful and necessary, must have some to oppose it, by which it becomes almost impossible to promote our own convenience and comfort. How often, in many parts of Christendom, has the location of the sanctuary, or a school-house, or public road, riven and ruined a pleasant and flourishing town. Men have made sacrifices to gratify their will, which if made for the general good, would have cradled controversy to sleep in an hour.

Why must there be men in every little circle, who can be pleased with nothing that pleases others? Why must we calculate that every good measure will make some one angry? This might easily be made a happy world, if a very few would calculate to let the general voice govern them. And how does it happen that men do not suspect themselves in the wrong, when they are for ever on the list of opposition, when their attitude is that of hostility whenever they act with other men in public measures? The little passions of childhood are carried with some men into their maturer years. They make themselves offended at some measure, and can then no more be reasoned with than you could reason with a tempest. To try to please them but increases the spleen that controls them. "I have piped unto you, and ye have not danced, I have mourned unto you but ye have not lamented."

Thus all measures that regard the general good are more or less defeated, except when public good yokes itself with private interest, while a spirit of condescension would render this a pleasant world. Now the good man, if his mind be at all enlarged, must turn from all this with disgust, and must sometimes feel ashamed that he belongs to a community so degenerate.

If he casts his eye into the domestic circle, where it would seem we might look for happiness if any where in this desert,

there is there but little to cheer his soul. The marriage contract is so often not the result of affection, but convenience, that harmony in many cases is not to be expected. The husband and the wife have distinct interests, and a distinct character, and hope, and purpose. The kind attentions that nourish domestic joy, are put off with the marriage robes, and the result is not that sweetness which love produces, but a scene of jarring and noise, or at best, the attitude of mere forbearance. Hence, as we should expect, there goes down through the children the same spirit of selfishness and discord that reigns in the hearts of the parents. Thus where should be cradled every virtue, where should be nursed the kindest endearments, where our country and the Church of Christ should rest their hopes, there is sometimes found the embryo of all public litigation, and strife, and confusion. The seeds thus sown in the domestic circle are nourished in the schools, and thus are early matured for operation, all the principles of depravity that go to wither all that is flourishing, and deform all that is fair, and blight all that is promising in this ill-fated world.

When the good man contemplates the Christian character, not as presented in the word of God, but as exhibited in actual life around him, he still has before him a picture that fills him with disgust and with tears. The very men who are bound for heaven have carried into their religion so much of worldly maxim and of human passion, as to put a blast upon the only fertile spots that stud this desert world.

One believer has about him all that is gay, and vain, and trifling, in the higher circles of the ungodly, with scarcely difference enough to beget the hope that he is born of God. He breathes an atmosphere where the humble, and retiring, and self-condemning spirit of the gospel is very much a stranger. Another has carried into his religion the coarseness and the vulgarity that better comports with sin than piety; and would hardly seem consistent with the benevolence of the gospel. Another would seem too dull and stupid to have partaken of that Spirit which, as a well of water, is represented as springing up into everlasting life. One has rather the rashness of a heaven-daring sinner, than the gentleness of the lamb; while another has carried his maxims of prudence to a pitch that forbids the discharge of any duty which the most ungodly do not approve. We see one who is too willing to shrink from every public duty, who will hide in a corner, that he may not be called upon to pray; while another has no enjoyment but as he may go forward and be conspicuous in every measure

of piety; has more enjoyment when he may teach than when he must learn, when he may lead in the prayer than when he must join with his brother. One believer so neglects his worldly concerns, as to come under the censure of not providing for his own, and especially those of his own house, while another suffers himself to be pressed with the cares of the life that now is, to an extent that seems hardly to comport with the exercise of a heavenly mind. When once we meet with the Christian character in all its native loveliness, meek, humble, watchful, prayerful, heavenly-minded, prompt in the discharge of every duty, but willing to be unnoticed and unknown; diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord—when once we see it thus clothed in all the attributes which it must wear in heaven, we meet with it often so deformed as hardly to recognise in its countenance the features of the heavenly family. With these deformed beings the believer must mingle; must come into close and friendly alliance; to them must be bound in everlasting covenant; and from their number, deformed as they are, must select the best associates he shall find till he reaches heaven. Hence, why be surprised if the wish escapes him that he could fly away and be at rest, could go and mingle with the general assembly of the Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, and enjoy there the society of those who have put off the body of sin and death, and are clothed upon with their house from heaven.

But when all this is said, there still is no object in all this polluted, and disloyal, and miserable world, with which he is so much disgusted as with himself. When the circle of his contemplations is contracted till it embraces nothing but his own deformed, and polluted, and wretched heart, then does he put forth his most ardent wish, and prefer his warmest prayer, that he may be permitted to fly away and be at rest. There is no object that disgusts him so much, for in no other case is pollution so nigh him, or so distinctly seen. It often seems to him impossible that his heart should have been renewed, and he be still so depraved. He is conscious of putting forth at times every depraved and base affection. He finds himself giving to created objects the regard due only to God. Every comfort Jehovah gives is liable to be erected into an idol, and loved with supreme attachment. He often finds himself disinclined to obey the law of God, esteeming his commandments grievous. He receives without due gratitude the bounties of heaven, or blesses only his own wisdom and prudence for the benefits which God bestows. When he has sinned, he

finds his heart hard and impenitent. If he has any glimpse of God, or of heaven, and attempts to rise to some tone of higher devotion, he finds his wretched heart attracted back by some object of sense, and coveting his ease and his indulgences. I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them? To obey his Redeemer requires of him a self-denial and an enterprise for which his heart is not prepared. He knows he has fallen, but cannot put forth the effort necessary for his recovery; and still does not hope to be happy till that effort is put forth.

And if the Spirit of God revives him, and this poor world is, for a time, blotted out; and he covenants anew with God, to walk in his ways, and do his commandments; still, in the midst of such mercy, compared with which, no blessing ever enjoyed on earth is equal, he sees some object that lures him away from God, and he follows it, and is plunged again into darkness and distress. In no other case, perhaps, does he commit a greater crime, or do himself a greater injury, or imitate more closely the deeds done in heaven by the fallen spirits. When God lets down so much of heaven into the soul, and permits his people for a week or a month to gaze upon his glories, it is no light thing to provoke him to eclipse the view. But the child of God who has ever been happy with the light of God's countenance, and is not happy now, must lie down under the conviction that he has done this very deed. God will never forsake us, till we forsake him. If he has caused his glory to shine upon us, he will never darken the view till our attention is divided between him and some created object with which he abhors to have his glory associated. The child of God thus laments when the vision is gone, in the pensive language of the poet:

“Trifles of nature or of art;
With fair deceitful charms,
Intrude into my thoughtless heart,
And thrust me from thy arms.

When I repent and vex my soul,
That I should leave thee so;
Where will those wild affections roll,
That let a Savior go?”

In every duty to God he finds himself coming short of his glory. He is ashamed of his prayers, his songs, and his sacrifices. Selfishness, pride, or ambition *mingle* at last with all his better mo-

tives, and mar every duty. "The very songs I frame," says the same poet, "are faithless to thy cause,

"And steal the honors of thy name,
To build my own applause."

If God makes him useful he claims some of the honor, and if he does any noble deed he expects his reward. He finds himself loving too ardently the things of time and sense, has too many cares and too many ties that are earthly and sensual, that assimilate him to the beasts that perish. He could not name, should he attempt it, the Christian grace that thrives in his heart as he could wish. He lacks the humility that becomes a sinner, the patience and the meekness that befit a daily offender, the repentance that God demands, and the faith which should purify his heart and work by love. His love to God does not measure itself by the attributes to be adored, and his esteem of the Lord Jesus Christ falls infinitely below his character. His benevolence is partial and limited, and shamefully inoperative. His regard to the gospel is measured and cold compared with the interest he has in it, and the faith he has professed, and the hopes he founds on it, and the beauty he thinks he has once seen in it. When he casts his eye upon an impenitent world he views their pollutions with too little disgust, their danger with too small emotions, and their approaching destiny with too little alarm. He carries haste to his closet, and formality to the family altar, and dulness to the sanctuary, and coldness to the communion, and unbelief to the Bible, and guilt, and shame, and apprehension to the chamber of meditation. The amount of the whole is a conscientiousness that his attention and his affections are divided between God and the world, between earth and heaven. In no one point does he come up to his own standard. His language is unclean! unclean! O wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from the body of this death!

And when the believer contemplates the dulness and darkness of his own mind he is far enough from being pleased with himself. His dulness often renders it a task to think, and his darkness renders every view he takes confused and indefinite. And he knows that the whole is his crime. He could easily have been more intellectual in his character, had he not debased himself by his sins, had he not limited his powers of thought and reflection by too exclusive an attachment, and attention too exclusive to small and mean objects. Hence when he would contemplate the character of God it is not easy and natural for him to soar away and dwell

on the Divine attributes. Some little object, awakening a little thought, and demanding no effort, calls him back to the creation, and God passes out of his mind. As soon might the domestic fowl join himself to the bird of passage, and with untired wing light in some foreign territory, as his mind sustain any prolonged interview with the great objects of faith. Hence he seldom mounts and quickly tires. The meditation necessary for the application of truth to his own sanctification is often a weariness. His mind has been weakened by its mean employment, by its neglect of thought, for the enterprise to which piety would summon it, till almost does it need regenerating as does the heart. It often seems to him impossible that with such a mind as his he can ever be the associate of angels, and think without tiring as they do. The great truths of revelation are above him, and the bible a dark book to him. Thus he is about as much dissatisfied with his intellect as with his heart. He wonders at the clemency of God, that it should ever have entered into his heart to fit him for heaven, and that he does not abandon his purpose of making him an angel. When he believes it possible that he can ever be made capable of sublime conceptions, and soar away to hold untiring communion with his Maker, then he utters himself in the language of the text, "O that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest."

Hence his very great dissatisfaction with his own conduct. His settled purpose is to walk uprightly. He would do good, but evil is present with him. He finds a law in his members warring against the law of his mind. Hence his retrospect of life is uniformly forbidding. Duty has been *neglected*; and when *done*, done in so poor a manner as not to deserve the name. And every little section of life has been polluted with something that should have been left undone; some wrong affection that should not have been exercised, some wrong passion that should not have been indulged, some wrong corruptions that should not have been conceived, some wrong hopes that should not have been embraced, some wrong apprehensions that should have been spurned, and many wrong deeds that should never have been committed. Hence find we the bitterest foe the Christian has, and let him exhaust his eloquence in berating him, and belittling him, and belying him, and when all is done, although he will be accused wrongfully, he will not have been rendered more degraded than he is degraded in his own view, nor be exhibited as more unworthy of heaven than he esteems himself.

Hence the good man feels that he has all the character he de-

serves. He has done so much to insult and abuse infinite purity, has stained his moral reputation with affections and deeds so at war with truth, and holiness, and righteousness, that he wonders if it be possible that heaven should ever respect him, and angels honor him, and the redeemed associate with him. Thus the believer is more disgusted with himself than with any other object in all the creation of God, would quit if he might his contact with moral corruption, would fly away and be at rest.

Finally, it is to the believer a source of grief and pain that he must meet with opposition in every effort he makes to meliorate the condition of his fellow-men. He sees the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain to be delivered from its bondage to sin, and yet unwilling to cast off its yoke.

Men are ignorant, and yet unwilling to be enlightened. What they know not is precisely that which they wish not to know, and *their reluctance to learn*, not the want of light, is the grand cause of their ignorance. As to God, they wish not to retain him in their knowledge. They are content not to be acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ, because they will not have him to reign over them. The distinguishing doctrines of the Bible only distress them, exhibit their depravity, their *dependence*, their *danger*, their *demerit*, and their *destiny*. Hence they are willingly ignorant. They love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. They hate the light, and will not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reprov'd. Hence every effort of the good man to remove the thing that pains him, to cure the wound that rankles before his eye and affects his heart, meets a repulse that distresses him. His kindness is nicknamed impudence, his tears are pronounced hypocritical, and his motives selfish. He must go into the wilderness and be a hermit, or see a whole world covered with the shadow of death and not weep for it, or contend for the truth, and carry in one hand the sword for his own defence, and with the other build the ruins of Jerusalem.

Men have a misgirted conscience, and wish not to be put right. While they may act *conscientiously*, they feel secure, and hope to be forgiven if they err. The kings of Judah and Israel would have the prophets prophecy smooth things, true or false. Men would *hope* that their course leads to *heaven*, if it terminate in perdition; and you offend them if you rudely tear this hope from them. So, many species of game, when pressed in the chase, are said to hide their heads in the snow, and dream not but that they are quite secure from the huntsman till the fatal moment when they are

taken and slain. Nothing is more offensive to the ungodly than your efforts to convince them that they are unsafe. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." But if they may approach that death, and not see it, if you will suffer them to dream on, and not awake them to the reality that it is a dream, they will be your debtors. But tell them of another God than him they worship, of another Savior than him they trust in, another gospel than that which they have believed, another hope than that which they have leaned upon, and another heaven than that which they have expected, and be *your* creed the truth, or *theirs*, they are outraged. "A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep: so shall poverty come as one that travelth, and thy want as an armed man." They wish not to have their old foundations torn up. They wish not to begin in their advanced years to learn another gospel. They are quite satisfied that they are on the way to heaven—*yours* may conduct to the same destiny, but they cannot now retreat. "We have loved idols, and after them we will go." "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Thus the good man, in attempting to cure the plagues around him, rolls up a steep acclivity a ponderous rock, that but rolls upon him, and consumes his strength and his spirits.

Men have polluted hearts, but they are unwilling either to know that they are polluted, or to have them cleansed. They are whole, and see no need of a physician, and know not that they are poor, and miserable, and blind, and naked. Tell them of a fountain where they can wash and be clean, and they will either deny their need of cleansing, or, like him of Syria, they will inquire, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? why may I not wash in them and be clean?" Or they will use the ancient proverb of Nazareth, "Physician, heal thyself." So the maniac believes himself the only man in the community who can reason, and supposes himself surrounded with madmen. Men do not thank you for discovering their unrighteousness, and consider your pity and your tears but weakness. It but mortifies them that you should presume to doubt but that their mountain stands strong. "I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my own heart, to add drunkenness to thirst." O, how can the good man not weep, to see every plague that preys upon an ungodly world incurable, and find all his kindness suspected, and all his benevolence repulsed? The prophet uttered

himself like a man of God, when he said, "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people."

Men have polluted their morals, and are not willing to know that the course they pursue renders them unhappy. Their wars, their litigations, their backbitings, their pride, and envy, and ambition, and avaricé, are but so many instruments of mutual slaughter. If men were content to let others have the life God has given them, and the wealth they have accumulated, and the influence they have acquired, how happy this world might be. Then every man would hold the place that his talents give him, and that his Maker gives him, and each would scatter blessings on all around him. Moses might not reprove his brethren, when they strove together. The one that did the wrong repulsed his kindness, and he had to flee for his life. You cannot commit a greater sin, in the world's esteem, than to persuade men that they would do well to love one another. And if you urge them to be kind to themselves, you have no thanks. Tell the profane man that his vulgarity hurts his reputation; tell the drunkard that his cups will devour him; tell the adulterer that his steps take hold on hell, and lead down to the chambers of death; tell the Sabbath-breaker that God will not have his institutions trifled with, and you but utter your charms in the ear of the deaf adder. Tell men to save themselves from this untoward generation, and will they *rave* or thank *you*? Ah, the experiment has been too often made to allow a doubt to remain, but that the man of God will be abused *so* much the more, by *how* much he is faithful in attempting to cure the plagues he laments. Hence, why wonder that the wish often escapes him, "O, that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away, and be at rest."

REMARKS.

1. While such may lawfully be the sentiments of the good man, we may not suppose him at liberty to *quit* the post of duty. If the world, or if his country, or commonwealth, or the Church, does not please him, it is his duty to make every possible effort to render them better. It may seem impossible that we should do any good when so much needs to be done. But if every man will exert the powers God has given him, he will be accepted. And moreover, if every good man will render one little spot verdant, the gloomy picture we have contemplated will soon become brighter. Let

every child of God be what he should be, and one of the gloomiest shades in the picture is gone.

2. The subject is calculated to *endear* the scenes of the *closet*. If all without is dark, then have we the more occasion to be alone with God. "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee : hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." In the closet there is light, be every other part of this world shrouded in impenetrable darkness.

3. The subject is calculated to turn our eyes to *heaven*. There is a retreat provided for the good man, where storms and darkness never come. When a few more dark days have hurried over him, he will be furnished with angels' wings, and will soar away to a place of rest.

Hence let there be no *impatience*. Heaven will be the more welcome, and the more pleasant for what we here endure.

SERMON LIV.

THE EVENING OF LIFE SORROWFUL.

PSALM XC. 10.

The days of our years are three score years and ten : and if by reason of strength they be four score years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow : for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

To those who do not credit the history of the Apostacy, and who still believe that there is one God, and that he is good, there must be something mysterious in the history of man. Why his days so few, and why those few so filled with sorrow ? Why so protracted, and helpless, and feeble, the years of his childhood ? Why his members so slow to do their office, and why the faculties of the mind so tardy in their development ?

Why do so few arrive at any thing like what may be termed the perfection of their nature, while the great mass of the human race never put forth any effort of thought that very highly distinguishes them from the beasts that perish ? They reach the common stature and acquire the agility and the strength of manhood, without their own care or choice, but the mind, untaught and undisciplined, remains almost in its state of infancy, till the body has reached its perfection and commenced its decay.

Thus there begins a second childhood, at the remove of but a few years from where the first was terminated. The man is seen to stand, for a moment, a being capable of some small degree of effort, and is then, while yet we have hardly known him, merged again into all the helplessness of a second humility. The body, it is true, retains its stature, but every limb is palsied, and every organ powerless. The mind sinks with the body, and seems at length on the point of being extinguished with it. But that the book of God has taught us otherwise, it would hardly be a sin to doubt whether the mind were not material like the body, and destined to perish at that juncture when the body begins to moulder.

Now why, says the infidel, would a good being give to any of his creatures, and especially to man, the noblest of the whole, an existence so immature, so transitory, and so miserable ? Nor can he ever gain a satisfactory answer to his gloomy inquiry, till he

believes that by sin came death, and so death hath passed upon all men for that all have sinned.

There is some mystery in all this even to the believer. In his creed, life is a scene of probation, where the soul may ripen for its future destiny. Hence why is so large a proportion of a life so short, filled up with incapacity of mental action? Why does not the mind come into being strong and vigorous, prepared to do the task assigned it? Why is not the heart prepared to put forth at the first, matured and powerful affections? Then the character might be formed at once, and the man might become, while in the present case he is an infant, matured in piety, and far less than half the probation now allowed him, would fit him to be the enlightened and useful associate of angels.

It is true, that many things could be said to vindicate the ways of God in all this, and if not, it would be easy to show, that as he is wise and good, and holds under his entire government the beings he created, he must have directed wisely all the circumstances of our probation. Here the humble believer could rest satisfied, and would be content to wait patiently till that day when all the appointments of heaven shall be freely vindicated.

The text brings into view a period of life peculiarly laborious and sorrowful: the years beyond seventy. 'This is an age at which but few arrive, and the few who do, rather *sigh* and *groan* than *live*. Not that every man is happy precisely up to that period, and then miserable: this would contradict experience. Some sink under the weight of years before they arrive at seventy, while a few others carry through perhaps another score of years, all the vigor of undecaying manhood. Still should we, from our own observation, draw the line between vigorous and pleasureable manhood and the haltings and gloominess of old age, we should probably fix it at three-score years and ten, where it is already fixed by the pen of inspiration.

In what follows, it will be my object to illustrate the truth of the text, and show that *the proper evening of life must ordinarily be laborious and sorrowful*. This will follow,

1. From the ordinary *weaknesses of the body*, in that advanced period of life. What our Lord said to Peter with reference to his crucifixion, might apply to every man: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." Very few are permitted to carry

with them down into the vale of years, the vigor of youth. The muscles lose their elasticity, the eye grows dim, the ear is dull of hearing, and the whole body bends toward the grave. How gloomy to see the old man leaning upon his staff, or advancing with slow and cautious steps, and interrupted by every obstacle that used to increase his speed, till at length he seats himself to rest, and pants as if he had made his dying effort. The grasshopper has become a burden. The slumbers of the night are interrupted with pain, and the least exertion brings on an almost insupportable lassitude. He aches for the repose of the grave, and hopes for no alleviation till his body has crumbled into dust. He seems to live merely to sigh, and groan, and suffer.

Nor can he fail to draw the contrast between his present and his youthful days. It seems but yesterday when every power performed its functions with agility, and when he could see none about him who were more active and sprightly than himself. Action was his enjoyment, and when he had toiled, his rest was long and sweet. Now when he has made his mightiest effort he is still a child, and trembles at the shaking of a leaf. He anticipates the hour when he must be thrown, in all his imploring helplessness, upon the support of his offspring.

2. That period of life is attended not only with a weakness and failure of the bodily powers, but with a decay of the mental energies. The mind that had seemed to mature with the body, seems now to be verging with it to the brink of destruction. The power of thought, of reflection, of association, and of reasoning, the power of recollection and of memory, seem all to partake of the same weakness as do the powers of the body. How does it affect our hearts, when an aged and venerated father begins to lose the countenances of his children, forgets their names, repeats in their hearing the same tale told an hour since, and now again rehearsed with all the animation and interest of novelty—when it is seen that the plainest matters of fact are controverted, and the most sacred pledge of confidence unredeemed—when the lapse of an hour seems a year or an age, and the same friend is accosted many times during the same interview, as then for the first time recognised, and constrained to reply again and again to the same interrogation, till the kindest feelings become the prey of fatigue.

And, perhaps, amid the whole, there is, to the man himself, no conviction of failure or decay. There is the same entire confidence in every dictate of the mind, as when it remained unimpaired in the man of fifty. Occasionally, perhaps, we do see all

its former excellence. The mind makes one effort before it recollects its weakness, and there is in that effort all the vigor of matured reflection; but it sinks immediately, and then is witnessed the imbecility of childhood.

I not long since heard an aged minister of Christ address his people, extempore, on the concerns of futurity, when there was a striking display of this mixture of strength and weakness. One moment he reached his point by some strong, condensed, and convincing argument; at the next he had lost his strength, and was weak as other men. Now he softened down the burning glories of the Godhead till human eyes would gaze and live—and while yet the figure was scarcely finished, the vision had fled; he raised his hand to give the sentiment its proper emphasis, but his hand remained stationary, and the audience were subjected to the pain of carrying out the sentiment by their own effort, or of seeing fled for ever one of the finest thoughts that ever dropped upon them from human lips. Now it does not concern, in the present inquiry, to decide whether the mind is the subject of a real decay, or whether its failure is to be attributed to the derangement of the organs through which it operates. There can hardly be a doubt but that it will appear in all its strength and stature, unimpaired by age or effort, when once it shall be dislodged from its crumbling mansion. This will be believed by all who have confidence in its immortality. But its apparent decay has at present all the effect of a reality, producing in the mind of the beholder all the pity, and brings upon itself all the diffidence, the darkness, and the distress of a real approximation toward extinction.

3. The period of which we speak is of course subjected to a distressing depression of animal spirits. When there has come upon the members of the body a prostration so total, and upon the mind a correspondent imbecility, it cannot well be hoped that there shall remain the same flow of spirits, the same animation and spirit of action, and enterprise, as when there was felt all the vigor and the impulse of youth. Hence we often see the old man gloomy and depressed. Small as are the remains of his energy, mental or corporeal, he has not sufficient ambition to put in action the powers that he does possess. He feels that he is beginning to lose all his consequence and all his influence. He is listened to with the profoundest respect, but when his sentiments are communicated, he has the mortification to know, that having wholly mistaken the point, or having failed to utter the thought which he intended to communicate, or from some other cause to him inexpli-

cable, there is really no weight given to his argument, and all his labor is lost. He now begins to retire from a community who conceive, at least, that they can manage more wisely without him. But he carries gloom and sorrow into his retirement. The mind that has been active, and has commanded attention and respect, cannot, without some degree of pain, see itself neglected, and sinking into comparative disesteem. Hence we cannot wonder if we see crossing the cheek, furrowed with age, the tear of melancholy. Every dutiful child, and every man in youth and middle age, who respects himself, will readily wipe away that tear. But when all is done that filial affection and gratitude can do to smooth the aged father's path to the sepulchre, still that eye, now dim with age, must weep, and that mind, which sees decaying every organ of its communication, must naturally shrink back upon itself, and mourn that it must so early become obsolete. And we shall still more strongly expect this operation of old age, when we reflect,

4. That the man who has passed threescore years and ten, must find himself deserted of almost all the companions of his youth. He has lived to bury that whole generation who were cotemporary with his boyhood and his youth. He has parted, perhaps, with the companion of his bosom, and has been present at the interment of almost all his mother's children. He seldom meets with one who can rehearse with him the scenes of his early life, or feel any sympathy in the story of his pleasures or his escapes. He stands like a tree which was once in the bosom of a forest, but now is left to feel the full weight of every storm, while the associates of his youth, whose united energies would obtrude the blast, have all perished; and his decaying boughs too strongly indicate that he must soon yield the soil to a later growth, and permit the winds of heaven to pass unobstructed. True, he is surrounded by his children, and they are dear to him, and he to them. They feel every sigh he heaves, and would, were it in their power, return him to his former enjoyments. But they cannot restore to him the companions of his youth, they cannot relax the rigidities, or brace the weaknesses of a broken constitution. They can only nurse him, and smile upon him, while to him the world seems empty, as if some pestilence should prey upon its whole population, leaving only here and there a solitary individual, or as if some earthquake should suddenly hide from our view every human being who had known us or loved us.

It is said that the aged, while they have a keen recollection of

what passed in their youth, remember with difficulty the scenes of later life. The impressions which the mind received while it was young and tender remain, while the events more recent are lost. Hence, break up every early connection, associate with the grave and the dead all the moving scenes of life, and you have covered the aged man with a cloud, from which he will find it difficult to emerge, till he goes to his long home. Hence, it will naturally be expected, that the evening of life will be lowering and gloomy. True, if the man of eighty has loved the Lord Jesus, there still remains unbroken the tie that binds him to his best friend, and the presence of God may render him happy. I have read of an aged Simeon, who waited for the consolation of Israel, and who was enabled to sing and rejoice on embracing the infant Redeemer. But even Simeon, in the midst of his enjoyments, chose rather to depart in peace, and enjoy the fruits of salvation in some better world.

5. There must accompany that period of life of which we speak, in spite of every effort to efface it, the strong impression that every step is upon the margin of the grave. Occasionally, perhaps, the few months that remain may seem to the aged man like a thousand years, but his habitual conviction must be that his race is almost run. The ties that have bound him to life are fast breaking. Every pang he feels reminds him that his grave will soon be ready. So tardy flows the stream of life as to assure him that soon the heart will beat no longer.

Hence, should he think of forming new relationships, he could hardly hope that they would exist till they should become consolidated. If he make any new attempts to increase his wealth, he but toils for another, and so becomes a slave. Would he improve his mind, he finds it not susceptible of new impressions, and the toil wears him out the sooner. Thus is he impeded in every effort by the abiding conviction, that already his days are nearly numbered.

REMARKS.

How indispensable that the aged have the supports of piety. Else that period of life must find its miseries tenfolded. The gray headed unbeliever has no view that is pleasant. When he looks back he sees nothing but a dreary waste of sin and death. No deed of his past life, no affection or motive will bear a serious review; hence he is afraid to reflect. When he looks within, he sees an evil heart of unbelief, matured by a long and obstinate conflict with God, for a dreary and fearful abode in the pit. And

when he anticipates the judgment, he has no solid ground to hope that it shall not consummate his present wretchedness. Thus is added to all the gloom induced by age, infirmity, and crime, the apprehended horrors of the second death.

But when gray hairs are found in the way of righteousness, when the man advanced in years is also advanced in grace, there is before the eye of the mind one prospect bright and luminous. He may sigh under his growing infirmities, may realize the temporary decay of his mind, may feel the loss of his friends, may mourn his loneliness, and expect soon his departure, but may look forward with pleasure to the scenes of a better life. Then his youth will be renewed as the eagle's, his mind will regain its vigor, he will meet again many of the companions of his youth, every cloud that hung over him will have fled, and death be swallowed up in victory. Now he can wait patiently all the days of his appointed time till his change come; till he come to the grave in peace as a shock of corn fully ripe.

One word to those who have approached this gloomy period of life unsanctified. Perhaps the infirmities of age may have brought upon the mind a stupidity which will forbid you to own this character. But this will not alter the reality. If you are unsanctified, the fact is known to him who in a few days will judge you. Why not make one more effort to escape from the miseries of the second death. You have sometimes known a dying effort to prove successful. Despair has sometimes inspired the onset that has saved a besieged army. One has achieved, to save his life, or rescue his family, what had not been possible in ordinary circumstances. You may have known the case where a father, to save his child, has forced his way through volumes of fire, not to be endured but in just such an emergency, yet accomplished his object and lived. Just such an effort you should make to escape from the wrath to come. What if you do feel the weaknesses of old age? if the soul is not safe, make it safe, or die in the agonies of a desperate attempt. Think not, my father, that this subject may be dismissed, because you have neglected the season in which it should have been attended to. To dismiss it will cost you your soul. It may be a late hour to attend to it, but it must have your attention. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Were you on your death bed, and had done nothing, we should urge upon you the possibility of making your escape, even then. But you are yet, perhaps, in the enjoyment of ordinary health. We wish you too well, to be willing that the miseries of old should at length

terminate in perdition. Heaven yet offers you salvation, and if you will but terminate the quarrel with your Maker, and believe on his Son, you shall live. Is it not worth an effort? I urge it, because you must so soon put on the shroud and lie down in the grave—that what is done must be done now, or *you* are for ever undone.

I must not conclude, till I have addressed those of the aged who have a good hope through grace, that with them the great work of life has been attended to. Still, fathers, you may not presume that you have no more to do. I presume you are conscious that you have not been very profitable servants. If you hope that your trials are almost over, and that you shall soon be glorified, your industry should be greatly increased. A pilgrim that has almost reached his home, will sometimes make a longer journey the last day than on any other. A miserable world should have your dying blessing. You may “yet let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father in heaven.” Perhaps some effort at faithfulness might yet render you the instrument of salvation to some perishing sinner. You can yet do much for the perishing heathen, and you can offer many prayers for the advancement of the Redeemer’s kingdom. You must not be willing to escape to heaven and leave the world as miserable as it may be, but as holy and happy as you can render it.

An increased activity is, of all others, the best means of rendering the evening of life happy. A sentinel may not leave his post till his watch is out. Not one of you will remain here longer than God has employment for you. And the hope of heaven, so soon, should beget in you the energy of a young believer. Should the soldier know, that when he has fought another battle, he is to go home and receive the honors of his king, think you that he would not try to do himself honor in that last conflict? Would you not tremble for that section of the opposing army who presented themselves before the point of his sword? And why should not the believer, of three score years and ten, who is to be so soon in heaven, summon up all his strength, and put in requisition all his wisdom, that by one decided and mighty effort, he may spread as wide a ruin as possible in the ranks of the prince of darkness? One year spent in making such an effort, and how pleasantly could he die. He would thus stimulate those who should continue in the work after his departure, and who can doubt but in that case his track to the grave would be the more luminous, and his passage through the valley more pleasant?

SERMON LV.

HEAVEN'S CURE FOR THE PLAGUES OF SIN.

ROMANS XIII. 8.

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another.

SIN has made this a miserable world. It has bred a host of unhallowed passions, which perpetually operate to widen the wastes and aggravate the miseries of the curse. One who was a stranger to these passions, and should see how they operate, would wonder if men were happy in proportion as they rendered each other miserable!—if their only remaining joy consisted in laying waste the inheritance of their neighbors. Else why with so much industry and perseverance, do they endeavor to wrest from others their wealth, their good name, their influence, their quiet and their hope. And yet the inference drawn from all this would be incorrect. Men are not happy in rendering others less so. They may gratify malignant passions, but this gratification is not happiness; it but stimulates the plague that reigns in the bosom, and gives it an increased ability to destroy; it but feeds the fever that rages afterward with the more violence, produces inward distress, and preys upon the soul with a more insatiable and uncontrollable severity. Follow home the man who has been out to injure his neighbor, who carries home with him a shilling that is not his own, or the consciousness that he has made any inroads upon happiness or character, and as you live you find that man unhappy. He brings into his own family the passions that raged abroad, and the bed that should give him rest, is a bed of thorns. He has obeyed the dictates of his own evil heart, but he now must listen to the reproaches of a wounded conscience. He is constrained to know that he has done wrong; and is strongly apprehensive of a re-action that will render his own territory in its turn the seat of a similar warfare.

The text enjoins a temper and a conduct by which men might render each other happy, might convert this desert into the garden of God, and make our passage through it gay and cheerful. The apostle had treated of the honor, the affection, and the duty which

men owe to their superiors, and proceeds in the text to lay down rules that apply generally to all men; rules which, if observed, would tend greatly to meliorate the condition of the apostacy. We are to pay every debt but love. This we are to feel that we are to be always paying, but must ever owe. This is a debt that we are to be willing to owe to all men for ever. To this we are to be urged by the consideration that love is the fulfilling of the law; by which the apostle means, no doubt, the second table of the law. Hence he enumerates some particulars of that section of the decalogue: "Thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness; thou shalt not covet;" and, that no part might remain unsaid, he adds, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." He then sums up the argument, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

I shall endeavor to *explain the nature of love, show how it will operate, and press the duty*, but shall dwell particularly upon the last article.

I. I am to explain the *nature of love*. There are two kinds of affection that have this title. One is an approbation and affection for a character that *pleases* us; the other is an ardent good-will toward beings capable of happiness. Both of these affections are exercises of the Divine mind. God views all holy beings with approbation, and loves them in the first sense mentioned. Sinners he views with disapprobation, but still with compassion. Hence it is said that he is angry with the wicked every day; that is, he hates their character and conduct. And yet it is said, that he "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, might have everlasting life." One of these affections, that with which he views holy beings, is termed complacency; God is pleased with them. The other, that which he exercises toward wicked beings, who are capable of being happy, is termed benevolence; God wishes them happiness. And both of these affections are enjoined upon man. God and angels, and all holy beings, we are obligated to look upon with complacency, and towards all men we are bound to exercise good-will; this is the affection enjoined in the text. It is our duty to feel kindly towards all men, to wish them happy, and, as far as in our power, accomplish our wishes. It may be well to say, however, that there is one exception. There are beings whom God has condemned to everlasting unhappiness. In this case, we may not

wish to reverse the appointment of God, and snatch from misery those whose release would be inconsistent with the general good. We may wish well to all men, and still be willing to see the convict imprisoned and executed. This the good of the civil community demands, and this benevolence assents to, nay, even requires. He who would suffer the murderer or the incendiary to go at large, would find it difficult to evince his benevolence. And God may be good to all, and his tender mercies over all his works, and still there may be some whom his benevolence may never render happy. There may go after the wretch whom the general good requires should suffer, a lingering look of compassion; there may follow him into his exile and his ruin the goodwill that would have made him happy; but there may be felt towards other beings an affection so strong as to prevent it from being exercised.

This exception, then, plainly, understood, benevolence, as enjoined in the text, is a high regard to the well-being of all creatures who are capable of being made happy. I was to inquire, in the

II. Place, *How this affection will operate.* Here the path of our thoughts is plain. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor. It will neither kill, nor steal, nor covet, nor defraud, nor witness falsely. It will lead to the discharge of every debt but one, and that one the debt of love; it will delight to owe and pay, and still owe for ever. Those whom we love we wish happy; and in proportion to the strength of that affection, will be the energy exerted to accomplish that object. If to be calm and content will render them happy, we shall be reluctant to ruffle their temper or move their envy. If to be rich, and respected, and wise, will make them happy, we shall wish their success in business, their increased respectability, and their advance in knowledge. If health, and ease, and long life, and domestic friendship, will add to their enjoyments, we shall wish them all these; and what we *wish* for them, we shall be willing, if in our power, to *do* for them. But if only the grace of God can make them blessed; it will be our strongest wish, and our most ardent prayer, that God would sanctify them. Hence the reason why God's people expend the strongest efforts of their good-will to their fellow-men in rendering them holy. Hence the warnings, the reproofs, the threatenings, the admonitions of God toward a world he loves; and hence something of the same in his people toward those for whom they feel the highest good-will. 1

am ready to concede that the benevolence I describe does not exist but in the heart that is holy ; and still it may be urged upon all men, as their duty, that conduct, the want of which is their blot and their shame. What pleasure have we in contemplating the character of that man who does not wish the good of his fellow-men ; but can see about him percipient beings like himself, whom he is willing should be less blessed than they might be ? And yet, if we should judge from facts, we should be constrained to say that this character is common. He who would have what is not his due, what is it but a wish expressed, that his neighbor should be poorer than God has made him ? He who would unnecessarily speak evil of his neighbor, does he not express a wish that his neighbor had a worse character than the providence of God has given him ? And he who would irritate and provoke another, what wish does he express but this, that his neighbor might be less happy ? I proceed

III. To press *the duty of benevolence*. And here I would premise that the good-will which I urge is to be exercised toward friend and foe. The good which real benevolence wishes its object, is of the same value in the possession of one man as of another. Benevolence looks abroad to find happiness, and wherever it can be found rejoices in it ; or goes in search of misery, and wherever it is found, aims to convert it into joy. It is a pure and disinterested affection, hence is the offspring of a heavenly temper. I would urge it upon myself and my fellow-men,

1. By the *example* of God. I have already noticed that text in which he is said so to have loved the world. "that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, might not perish, but have everlasting life." God is said to be good to all, and his tender mercies are said to be over all his works. Even to the heathen world "God did not leave himself without a witness, in that he did good, and gave them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness." "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Thus God employs himself in making a world of sinners happy. How constant and how varied are the operations of the Divine benevolence. Life and health, and food and raiment are his gifts, and are bestowed on his friends and his foes. No man is so impious but God continues to water his fields, and give health and fruitfulness to his flocks ; surrounds him with friends and helpers, replenishes his table, and fills his

cup, his store-houses and his barns ; keeps all his bones that none of them are broken, and perpetually supplies him with countless sources of comfort. There is no year, no day, no hour, when his hand is not stretched out to convey benefits to every house about you and to every being, however regardless of His agency, and however ungrateful.

Now the text, and the whole Bible, just urges upon every man this same expanded benevolence. You are required to be a worker together with God. If many around you are your enemies, and you would urge this as an excuse for neglecting to do them good, you are to remember that God does not act thus. The very man that you hate the most, is, it may be, the enemy of God ; but God continues to do him good every moment ; never neglects to cause his heart to beat and his lungs to heave ; watches him at night, and in the morning wakes him, feeds him, clothes him. And perhaps you are as much the enemy of God as the man you hate, but God is good to you. When you plough your field and scatter your seed, you expect him to make it vegetate ; and when you have sent out your ships, he sends the generous and friendly gale. Then why not imitate an example so infinitely illustrious ? If there is not a foe you have, but God is doing him kindnesses every day, and he is perhaps as much, nay more, the foe of God, why not go and do likewise ? It would not injure you ; it would not disgrace you. If it would render you unhappy to do what would render your enemies happy, then know that you have not a godly temper, that you have not the benevolence which the gospel requires. God is happy while he makes glad his enemies. It gratifies the benevolence of his heart, if they rejoice. But you would carry, it seems, if you could, sorrow and vexation to every house where you have not a friend ; you would measure their worthiness by their attachment to you, and *your* benefits by *their* worthiness. But God has pleasure in doing good, if from the heart that he make glad there never rises any incense of praise or one note of gratitude. He is pleased when men are sensible of his benefits, and when they love to praise him, but it gives him joy to do good, abstractly from any return that creatures make. Now we can meet with no case more forbidding than God meets with. There are some into whose bosoms God has poured his blessings these seventy years, and there has never yet been awakened one sentiment of gratitude. There has risen to his throne every hour the murmurings, the repinings, the complaints, and the spleen of an impious heart and, perhaps daily, the vibrations of profane and

lying lips. Yet all this never induced the Lord to leave his fields one year unwatered, or leave him one day without light, and food, and reason. Who is there, then, that can have a foe so inveterate that he is not under obligation, if in his power, to do him good? If then we find ourselves, instead of exercising such a spirit, engaged in injuring a fellow-creature, we have only to recollect how differently God is doing at the same moment. We are wronging him, and God is feeding him; we are defaming him, and endeavoring to diminish his influence, and God is giving him health, and wealth, and friends. Now one is thus placed in a very unpleasant attitude. Suppose Jehovah visible; he and you meet at your neighbor's door; you have come to ruin him, but God has come to bring him blessings. He is your enemy, and he is God's enemy. He has *once* injured you; God he has wronged and abused every day he has lived. And when the Lord has supplied *his* wants, he comes to your door and supplies *yours*, and you perhaps have been as base a rebel as your neighbor. Now, although God is not seen by the eye of sense, the fact is not altered; his benevolence leads him all this length. He bestows blessings every hour upon the man who would injure; supplies the wants that you create, heals the wounds you inflict, and repairs the reputation you destroy. O, let shame cover us! and let the benevolence of God teach us to drop our blessings on all men, at all times, if they are within our reach, and we have any good to bestow.

2. We are urged to the same duty by the *command* of God. God does not exhibit his example before us, and leave it to our option whether we will do like him. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This is the law, precisely, by which heaven has bound us. Whatsoever, then, we would that others should do to us, we are to do the same to them. The command is, "That we love our enemies, bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us, and pray for them that despitefully use us, and persecute us." It is enjoined, "that we love one another with a pure heart, fervently." "That we honor all men." "That we be pitiful and courteous." "That we submit ourselves to one another," and be clothed with humility. "He that would be great must become a servant." "We are to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." "Nothing is to be done through vain-glory, but each, in lowliness of mind, esteem other better than themselves." "Every man is to look not on his own things, but every man also on the things of others," that thus the "same mind may be in us which was also in Christ Jesus." "We are to follow after the things

that make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another." We are to have that "love that worketh no ill to his neighbor." We are to "love not in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." God urges that we should love one another by the consideration, that he so loved us, that he sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins. Thus are we taught of God to love one another.

And the Scriptures teach us what the effect of this love will be. It will lead to an *affectionate deportment*, and a readiness to serve each other. It begets a spirit of *forbearance*, of *truth*, of *unanimity*, of *self-denial*, of *meekness*, and *forgiveness*. It "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." It "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Thus do we see a few of the outlines of the code of love. Thus the Divine authority binds us to the exercise of that same benevolence which God displays in his own providence toward all men. Hence our obligations to be benevolent will bear, in our view, an exact proportion to our respect for the authority of God: if the latter be supreme, so will the former.

3. Benevolence affords its possessor a *permanent* and *high enjoyment*. It is, in its nature, a sweet and calm affection, has its origin in heaven, and exerts a sanctifying influence upon every other exercise of the soul. It is an affection which we can contemplate with pleasure; and view with complacency. If I know that I love my fellow-men, I am conscious that I feel as God does, and as he commands me to feel. I see, in that case, the image of my Creator in my heart. Hence it begets joy and hope. I believe, then, that God has wrought in me, by his Spirit, has left upon the heart his own impress, and will one day make me wholly like him, and take me to himself.

But this is not all: a benevolent heart makes all the happiness it sees its own, and thus widens, indefinitely, the sphere of its enjoyment. It has a real pleasure in another's joy, and still does not diminish the good on which it feeds and thrives. If there is harmony in the civil community, or domestic quiet in any house, or joy in any heart, or peace in any conscience, the benevolent man enjoys it all, and makes it all his own. The whole aggregate of enjoyment about him becomes appropriated to himself; if *any* are happy, he is. The man of *taste* will enjoy what is the property of a neighbor. If he can see, within another's enclosures, a verdant spot, a lawn, an orchard, or a grove, his eye extracts from it a pleasure, which no power can prevent, which no barriers can

defend. It is his right, for no one suffers by his enjoyment—no one is made the poorer by his claim, or suffers to serve him. So the man of real benevolence gathers into his own heart the joy that elates the hearts of others, and into his own home, the quiet, the good-will, the condescension, the harmony, and the hope, that prevail in the home of his neighbor.

Let there be enjoyment *any where* about him, and it increases *his own*. Hence he is the only man who can beguile the miseries of human life, and rob the old serpent of his sting. Nothing can make him miserable, if there is happiness any where. Rob him of his comforts, and, in an hour, he can go and gather more. So the bee, if you take away the bread he has brought home, can hie him away to some opening flower, and gather a new supply. Hence, in the dark hour, when all others are wretched, the man of real benevolence can be happy.

The soul that's filled with virtue's light,
Shines brightest in affliction's night,
And sees, in darkness, beams of hope.

But you tell me, that philanthropy, in a world so miserable as this is, is likely to create more misery than joy. In every look we take athwart its wastes, there strike the eye ten objects, *polluted, deformed, and miserable*, where there is one of order, joy, and beauty. Hence it would seem, that the man of kindest feelings, must be the greatest sufferer, whilst the callous and the cold, who are unmoved by human misery, and have no tears for another's wo, have the greatest share of enjoyment. All this seems *rational*, but is not *true*. Benevolence is an affection, which carries its own reward with it, and must render the heart happy that puts it forth, were there nothing about it but misery. It finds a kind of relief in its own tears, and if all the objects on which it can fasten a look of sympathy must remain unhappy, it can gather to itself enjoyment from the sympathy it feels.

But the benevolent heart is not driven to this alternative. This world is not *wholly filled* with misery. There may be a dreary spot just here; a dearth of piety, the absence of all holiness, and the presence of stormy passions; but beyond this scene, there is fertility and life. God there appears in his glory, men are sanctified, and are made happy, and there is joy and gladness. The benevolent Howard spent much of his life in the prison, but he was comforted to know that this world was not all a prison. He carried with him into the recesses and the infection of the dungeon

the recollection, that the sufferers about him were not the whole of this world's population. There were those at a little remove from him, who did not wear a chain, nor want for bread, nor sigh for liberty. There *were* dwellings into which the light of heaven might shine, where reigned health, affection, and joy. Upon these, when he could look at misery no longer, he could cast his eye and find relief. So the man in this age, or in any age, whose heart expands with benevolence, but who may chance to see misery all around him, has only to widen the circumference of his vision, and it embraces objects that can give him joy. If the case require he can look beyond this world to heaven. There every object will gratify the benevolence of his heart. All its inhabitants are holy and happy, beyond what hath entered into the heart of man to conceive. There is not one object in all its happy realms, on which, while the benevolent heart lingers, it feels not the most exquisite delight. Thus the good man, if the misery about him gives him pain which he can hardly endure, having that faith which gives him the power of flight, can wing himself to some happier clime, and inhale refreshment from scenes more adapted to his taste.

And there is one other thought from which we discern, clearly, the advantage of the benevolent man above all others, notwithstanding the pain he endures at the sight of misery. The heart that is not benevolent, is, of course, the seat of passions far more corroding and painful than the keenest sympathy. Pride, and envy, and ambition, and covetousness, with other kindred tormentors, hold the entire ascendancy, where the heart has not been melted into love. And who that has been the prey of these devourers, and has any conviction of their power to destroy, would not rather feel a philanthropy so pure, and be surrounded with miseries so multiplied as to keep the heart bleeding with sympathy, rather than be committed to their merciless and arbitrary supremacy? He who looks upon poverty, and famine, and nakedness, in their most appalling attitude, and *would give relief* but *cannot*, must indeed suffer intensely; but still he enjoys a heaven, compared with him who sees others too happy, and envies them. The one in the midst of all his tears, can be tranquil and submissive, while in the bosom of the other there burns a fire that consumes him. Howard found his joy diminished, because he looked upon plagues which he had not the power and the skill to cure; but compare the state of his mind, with his who has coveted, but

cannot possess the enjoyments of others, and, as you live, the one savors of heaven, and the other of hell.

If the objection had any weight, it would prove that God must be unhappy. His benevolence is infinite, and there lies, under his full inspection, the whole aggregate of pollution and misery that have found their way into his dominions. Even hell has no covering. He sees all the anguish and despair, hears every groan and sigh that escapes the lips of the lost. Still God is infinitely happy, and will be when every incorrigible rebel shall have made his bed in the pit, and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever.

And the more we are like God the more happy. Import into this world that same benevolence that led God to make his Son a sacrifice for sin, and you would fill it with piety and joy. And those who are losing the Sabbath at home, as they saw you pass, would half believe that you were angels. You would then apply yourselves to make this section of the apostacy more happy. You would heal every quarrel, would soothe every wicked passion, if you might, would check every prevailing vice, and relieve every want. You would go home and purge your house, and your neighborhood, from whatever would breed pollution and misery, and we should soon all forget that we had ever been unhappy. Life would steal away like the pleasant sceneries of a dream, and death would lose its terrors. We should almost forget that this world was not the rest that God had promised us. We should imagine ourselves suddenly transplanted into the midst of angels, should see in every face the countenance of a brother, and hear in every accent and in every song, the symphony of a heavenly friendship.

Do you say that I now tell you of heaven. Nay, *heaven*, one from that world must describe it. I tell you exactly what a little spot of earth might be, and what we might make it, were it not for those accursed passions, which we industriously cultivate, and which collect us joy from another's misery. Only let us feel that none about us can be too wealthy, too respectable, or too happy, to give us pleasure, and half the curse of the apostacy is removed. Let us feel that every wo another suffers is as much our own, as his, every tear he weeps and every scng he sings our own, and this world would cease to be a wilderness, and would become like the garden of God.

Let us then retire with this reflection,

Men are their own tormentors! Would they exercise benevolence, and exert themselves to make each other happy, much of the misery of this world would soon disappear, and the remainder would be so divided and subdivided as scarcely to be felt. And we should make our way on to heaven, forgetful that we were the inhabitants of a world that God has cursed. But if, instead of this, we employ ourselves in the work of mutual crimination and torture, we have none to blame but ourselves, if we wade to the grave in tears, and find it an avenue to the bottomless pit.

SERMON LVI.

HEAVEN'S CURE FOR THE PLAGUES OF SIN.—No. II.

ROMANS XIII. 8.

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another.

I HAVE sometimes thought with myself, what must be the sensations of the heathen, on observing the conduct of this world's population. They have no Bible to tell them the story of the apostacy, or to teach them the way of recovery. They see about them beings wholly depraved, exerting themselves to deceive, betray, and ruin each other. And they know not of any other life where the wrongs of the present can be rectified. The grave is to them an eternal sleep. And whether there be any God to witness the events that pass, must demand a doubt. How deplorable, to beings thus benighted, must be the condition of the human family, and how often must they give utterance to the wish, that they had died the first hour they came into life.

Even with the Bible in our hands, and all these mysteries explained, we sometimes wonder that God would build a world and then suffer it to become so ruined. And still we can have no fear but that it will appear at last that God has done all things well. It is not his purpose that this world shall always exhibit the same gloomy and forbidding view as at present. During the period of millennial glory there will be, if not a universal holiness, at least such a prevalence of piety as will give this world a regenerated aspect. To this day God's people have looked by faith these many thousand years. But is it not to be feared that we have considered it too remote, and have exerted too little agency in hastening its coming? We have *believed* and *prayed*, and have considered this the whole of our duty, while it should be our care to cultivate a little spot in the wastes of sin, and as soon as possible remove from that spot the whole of the curse. Let there prevail the benevolence enjoined in the text, and the face of the moral world will immediately be changed. Let the contest be which will do the most to render others happy, and the millennial year has come. I attempted in a previous discourse to explain the nature

of benevolence, to show how it will operate, and urge the duty. I observed that we are obligated to feel kindly to all men by the *example* of God, by his *command*, and by the *happiness* which the *exercise affords* to its possessors. I notice,

IV. The *happiness it communicates to others*. I am aware that there must be in the heart, a wish to communicate joy to others ; in other words, there must be some portion of the very benevolence recommended, in order that the motive now presented should operate. But this is true of all motives, except such as address themselves to the selfish feelings. The man who is wholly un-sanctified will not regard the example or the authority of God. But we always address the motives of the gospel to affections that do not exist till God produces them, and still we hope that God will give the word success. I would then urge all the believers and the unbelievers to love their fellow-men, from the fact that by putting forth this affection you can create a world of happiness.

In the first place, look about you and see what need there is of more happiness than at present exists, what abundant opportunity there is for your exertion. You cannot be ignorant that you live in a ruined world, where, if you are disposed to be kind, you can find abundant employment. You can find misery in almost every shape and shade. You meet with the poor, the ignorant, and the vicious. Some have no bread, some no Bible, and others, I had almost said, no Sabbath, no gospel, and no conscience. There are some who pay no regard to Divine institutions, and seldom or never visit the sanctuary. There are feuds and contentions and alienations and enmity. There are families where there is no domestic happiness, where there are neither smiles nor songs, nor ple sant words, nor kind affections. The husband and the wife, whom God has constituted one flesh, live in a state of utter alienation. The children are rude and ignorant, and the parents perpetrate intemperate and harsh, and profane and false.

And you can find families who are at war with each other, who are stationed side by side, but through all the year have no interchange of kind offices. There, too, are the rich who have become poor, the respectable who have lost their character, the decent who have become intemperate, the civil who have become profane, and the pure who have become lewd. You can easily meet with the captious, the rude, the passionate, the deceitful, the false, the idle, the covetous, the extortionate, the insubordinate, and the quarrelsome. Ask one man his opinion of his neighbors, and he

will bring a charge against some of them, ask another and he will accuse the first, and a third the second, and a fourth the third, and finally, if you believe nothing, you will say with David, that all men are liars, and if you believe it all, you will fancy yourself associated with a community of convicts. How common are contentions, quarrels, law-suits, and disappointments, and vexations. How few men will you find who know of none of whom they wish to speak unkindly, none who have wronged them, none who defame them, none who hate them, none who envy them.

But I presume enough has been said to remind you that you live in a world where there is need enough of your benevolence. Nor will you presume that this picture is darker than the truth. The fact is, it would fill a volume to tell the whole. I have only glanced at the subject with a view to show you a little section of the field which your benevolence should cultivate. Would it not be desirable to apply a remedy if you might to this complicated malady. Be willing, then, to practice the benevolence required, and the remedy is applied and the cure effected. I cannot fix my eye upon any item in this catalogue of miseries, but I instinctively recur to the men who could reach a cure to the very case. If I think of the suffering poor, there are those at hand who have all the wealth necessary for their relief. Nor is there any quarrel, but there are those who could still it; or litigation, but there are those who could stop it; or mistake, but there are those who could rectify it; or injury, but there are those who could repair it. The profane man has some who countenance, and, if they were disposed, could silence him; the intemperate have such about them who aid and encourage them, and there are those who, exerting their influence, could reform them. Let us look at this case a moment. Once suppose that every mind, but that of the drunkard himself, was suitably impressed with the danger and the misery of his course, and that no one would put the cup in his hand any sooner than he would present him the knife with which he intended to slay himself, tell me if it is at all probable that he would ever be again intoxicated? No, when decent men shall know their duty and do it, when they shall watch the drunkard as they would the man who was meditating suicide, and stand between the one and the cup, as they would between the other and the knife, and risk their very limbs to save him, this dreadful avenue of death is closed, and there is not a single drunkard to curse society. And there would thus disappear in an hour, at least half the plagues that prey upon the world's guilty and infatuated popu-

lation. And the benevolence which the text enjoins, let it once prevail, would accomplish this with promptness and with ease. The idle, are all within the reach of an influence that could render them industrious; the Sabbath-breaker, of an influence that could bring him to the sanctuary; the covetous, of an influence that could render them generous; the indecent, of an influence that could civilize them; and the captious, and refractory, of an influence that could render them manageable and civil. If you doubt this bring to yourself the case, and survey the circumstances. First name the evil,—then the two, or the four, or the ten, as it may be, who support it. Let these become good men, and the plague is cured. I know that if we were all holy we should be but men, and should be subject to many weaknesses, mistakes, and dangers. But cure once the miseries that sin produces, and God would remove the residue. Let him see from his holy throne the population of one town, bending every effort to cure its own calamities, and he would act as he never yet has, if he did not render the effort successful.

And does not the motive now presented, wear an enchanting aspect. I am urging you, my dear friends, to love your fellow-men from the consideration of the good you could then do them. I look around me and see in varied forms a vast amount of misery. The view creates distress, and I urge you to attempt its cure.

Are you willing it should remain? Can you think of leaving your children to spend their life in the midst of it? Can you quit the world peaceably till what you can do has been done, to fertilize the moral waste, over which you expect so soon to cast a lingering, dying look. The miseries we contemplate are contagious, and may when we have done with life, enter our habitations, and prey these twenty generations, upon our children's children. If you leave one infidel, one profane man, one who is intemperate, one Sabbath-breaker, one scoffer, one disorganizer, unreformed, he may find access to the bosom of your son, may carry the pestilence into your house, may spread the plagues we contemplate through all the ranks of your posterity till they come down in a mass to perdition.

Would it not render you happy to die assured that you had been useful. If you could transport yourself to some isle of the Pacific, and by your influence and your prayers tame and evangelize its whole population, would it not seem a very desirable exploit? You may do all this good at home, and feel as joyous at last as if it had been done in the other hemisphere, and for another people

We have none about us who worship a block of wood, but we have no doubt many who are as real idolaters as can be found in the recesses of Tartary or on the banks of the Ganges. We have none who lacerate their bodies to fit themselves for heaven, but there are many who inflict upon their consciences and their peace, wounds deep and wide and incurable. We have none who *may not have* the word of God, but many who trample its precepts under their feet; none without a Sabbath, but many who do not sanctify the day of rest; none who never heard the gospel, but many who never obeyed it; none without the bread that perisheth, but many who have no relish for that bread which endureth to everlasting life. Here then, on the hither side of every ocean, is a field where benevolence may operate in the cure of distress, and where it may achieve a conquest as valuable and as splendid, as can be won in any land or any clime.

V. I urge you to benevolence by one other motive, *the dying love of Christ*. It was in the cure of this very same distress, that he came in the flesh and died on the tree. He was rich, but for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich. He came to seek and to save them that were lost. His heart bled, it would seem, over the miseries of the apostacy. He felt a benevolence which to gratify, he let go all the honors of the upper world. He saw us cast out in the day that we were born, polluted, and in our blood; and as he passed by us, he bid us live. But he could only redeem us with his own blood. If he would be our friend, all the wrath which it became us to feel he must endure.

Now the same world that he pitied so much, we are inviting you to compassionate. And he declared himself our friend, while we were all his enemies. Probably some of the very court that condemned him, and the band that took him, and the guard that watched him, purged their iniquities in his blood. Hence, if men hate you it affords no reason why you should not love them. While we were yet enemies, Christ died for us.

Enter then upon the work of making your fellow-men happy, and you are in the very vineyard where the Lord Jesus labored. He has already rescued from the ruins of the apostacy, a great multitude that no man can number. The work is going on, and he invites your co-operation. To be employed with him will be honorable, and will secure to you a share with him in the same victory, and the same awards. "He that overcometh will I grant

to sit with me on my throne even as I overcame and am sat down with my father on his throne." It would seem that no one could resist the motive thus presented. By all that Christ has done, by every tear he shed, and every prayer he uttered, and every pang he bore, you are urged to spend your strength, and utter your prayers, and weep your tears, in the cause of the same miserable multitude. And they are *your* brethren, they were not *his*. I urge you, in the name of my Master, to love your own mother's children, those who are flesh of your flesh, and bone of your bone. You can meet no man but a brother, you can hate no man but a brother, you are invited to do good to none else.

And in the Lord Jesus you are not only presented with a motive to become benevolent, but you have a pattern by which that principle should operate. It is said of him, that he went about doing good. When the disciples of John came to inquire who he was, they were sent away with this history of him, "The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." Thus all kinds of benefits that he could bestow upon a miserable world he did. His main object was to save the soul, and here he bent his mightiest efforts, because here could be applied the most effectual remedy to the maladies he came to exterminate.

But he could see misery in no shape and feel indifferent. He took our sorrows and bore our sicknesses. His path was lined with the couches of the palsied, the decrepit, the miserable; and every where there saluted him the cry of some blind Bartimeus, "Lord Jesus, have mercy on me." And he could suffer no such cry to be suppressed till the sufferer had come near and was healed. When there came to him the ten lepers, nine of whom he knew would never return to thank him, he healed the whole. The multitude who had gone into a desert place to attend upon his ministry, although they rejected the overtures he brought them, still must not be sent away till he had fed them. If any mother wished him to bless her children, they must open her an avenue to his presence. If one petitioned for the life of his servant, he must live. If even a Sidonian would ask his help, although it was not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs, and although he was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, still the veriest outcast must not go away from his presence without a blessing. Even the famishing and heretical Samaritan must drink the living water that springeth up to everlasting life. The very man who had come to take him must not leave his presence

wounded; and the thief, who in the dying hour solicited his aid, must go with him to paradise. Into every ear to which he had access he poured instruction; every house he entered he blessed; and in every village, and every street, where were the impress of his feet, were left behind him the fruits of his benevolence. Tell me the single case where he withheld the blessing that was asked, and you may go and do likewise. If he would not grant to James and John the distinction they craved in his kingdom, that being the appropriate appointment of the Father, still he would suffer them to drink of the cup that he drank of, and be baptized with his baptism. Thus there dropped from his hand, upon the beings that came about him, every variety of blessings. Who has not been impressed with the fact, that the very first miracle done in Cana of Galilee had respect to the conveniences of a marriage feast. He knew that if he should turn their water into wine, it would supply the deficiencies of poverty, render the host respected, and the occasion more pleasant.

Thus have we the very example we need. The benevolence which we are called to exercise must take the same track, must flow in the same channel. It will lead us, as we have the ability, to do every kind of good to all men; to supply their wants, heal their sicknesses, enlighten their ignorance, relieve their anxieties, awaken their consciences, and render smooth, and safe, and pleasant, their passage through this desert world. It will lead us to feel another's wo, and weep for another's misery. When the Lord Jesus approached Jerusalem, saw them about to reject him, and exclaimed, weeping, "O that thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace; but now they are hidden from thine eyes," how strongly and how strikingly does he pour out the benevolence of his soul. Thus we are to look over a world of beings that sin has rendered miserable, and weep as he did for the calamities that are coming upon them. And there is no man so poor or insignificant but he may communicate happiness. Let him add his weight, if it be but a grain, to the accumulating mass of public sentiment that is now attempting to put down sin and misery in every form and attitude, and he will not die till he has achieved something that will tell to his credit in the day of retribution. Some field of labor will always open to the industrious if they will enter and toil.

REMARKS.

1. In the *want* of this benevolence, how strong is the proof we

have that men are wholly depraved. It is common to find men who are willing to do good to their families and friends, to wish them prosperity and advancement, but if their kindness goes no farther, all is selfish. How few cast a look of sympathy over the whole surface of misery. This none do but believers, else others too would fulfil the law, and would be safe. Now men that cannot love their fellow-men, their brethren whom they have seen, how can they love God whom they have not seen? How can that heart be possessed of holiness that aches not at the miseries which sully this otherwise beautiful world? And how can the heart ache over woes which the hands are not employed in lessening or annihilating? Thus the second table of the law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," will be as swift a witness in the great day against the human family as the first. A totally selfish heart will find it as much impossible to put forth a benevolent affection toward man as toward God. In either case, it sadly interferes with our native self-supremacy.

2. We see the necessity that men should be renewed. Here lies our only hope that they will exercise the benevolence of the gospel. Till then they will fight and rage, and rave, will render themselves unhappy, and all others with whom they come in contact. Till then the war will continue in the family, the neighborhood, the town, the state, and the world. It is a cheering thought, that God has continued to us the means of curing that deadliest evil of the apostacy, a selfish heart. Without this nothing could have ever cradled the corrupt passions on a larger scale or smaller, and this poor world could have hoped for no respite from the plagues that waste its treasures and its health, and darkens, to the blackness of midnight, its immortal prospects. O, come that day, when the chief physician shall ply his skill, and change the hearts of men, and thus cure at one wondrous touch their thousand plagues. In any world a selfish heart, the opposite of love, would render men unhappy. Place selfish hearts in heaven, and they would there be as fruitful as elsewhere in misery.

3. How pleasant is the prospect of a millennium. Then the benevolence we contemplate will become general. Men will be employed in rendering each other happy. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the suckling child shall play on the hole

of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den." If by that promise that all shall know the Lord from the least even to the greatest, we are not to understand that every individual heart shall be made holy, still so many hearts will be sanctified that the prevailing influence on earth shall be a religious influence, and the paramount affection love. How easily then will all bad habits be corrected, how useless be bolts and bars, and criminal laws, and fortifications; and how done for ever litigations, and scandal, and alienations, and broken hearts, and ruined character, and bankruptcy, and imprisonment. Then this world, so long a raging ocean, will become at length a peaceful pool, reflecting the image of its Maker. Then God will delight in us, and angels love to watch over us.

4. The subject will lead us to think with pleasure of heaven. How pleasant is the thought of being removed from all this misery, and of being where there will reign a universal benevolence. Every angel, and every redeemed spirit will be willing that other angels, and other spirits should be as happy as himself. And the grand employment of heaven will be to communicate happiness. God they will love supremely, but as God is infinitely happy, and will not need their service, they will no doubt be employed everlastingly in making other beings happy. Thus they will be workers together with God: for it is thus that God is employed, and thus angels. See them at Sodom, see them at Babylon with Daniel, see them at Bethlehem, with the shepherds, and in the garden with the agonizing Redeemer. O, it is pleasant in this dark and perturbed world, to have a heaven to think of, and a heaven to hope for, where there will reign for ever an unqualified friendship, and our prayer, and our song, and our employ be the prayer, and the song, and the employ of all.

5. The subject renders a place of misery desirable. O, let these discordant passions one day find a world where they may live alone! If it does not comport with the purpose of God to eradicate them all, by sanctifying the hearts in which they predominate, let them be all congregated together, and no more disturb the peace and the quiet of those in whose hearts they do not reign. It is verily believed that when the whole design of digging a bottomless pit, and kindling a quenchless fire shall be known, and the beings judged who are there congregated, it will be seen that the universe could not have been perfect without a hell any more than a town or county could have done without a prison and a gallows. And all the people shall say amen.

SERMON LVII.

CHRIST CONDUCTS TO HEAVEN A HOLY PEOPLE.

TITUS II. 14.

Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

MORE than eighteen hundred years since, we were visited by a stranger from a foreign world. Two questions were immediately agitated. Who is he? and What his errand? He settled them both; but they have come up, again and again, to the present day. A previous discourse had a bearing upon the *first* of these questions, and the text now before us will require us to attend to the *second*. It is selected, you will remember, from that very book which he left with us, on purpose to answer every inquiry that men would need to make respecting himself and his mission. We learn in the context, who it was that thus gave himself for us: "The great God, even our Savior Jesus Christ."

My readers are aware, that the same men, who deny that our Savior Jesus Christ is the great God, differ as widely from the apostle, relative to the part he acted for us. They would allow that he was commissioned to make known to us the will of God, especially the fact of a resurrection, which nature did not reveal, and establish Christian ordinances, and set us an example of virtue. That his death was vicarious, or a substitute for our condemnation, they would generally, and I presume universally deny.

Now, if we need a Savior to do more for us than this, then we need, not the one they offer, but whom the apostle exhibits to our view in the text. If my sins must be atoned for, if an evil heart of unbelief must be removed, and when sanctified, I must still be accepted through the merits and the righteousness of another, then I need a Savior to do more for me than teach me truth, and give me ordinances, and be my pattern in virtue.

Had my ruin consisted merely in having lost a knowledge of God and duty, an angel might have become my instructor, and his example would have answered me the same purpose, as that of the Son of God. It would have seemed in that case wholly unne-

cessary, that God should be manifest in the flesh. But if the whole *heart* was faint, as well as the whole *head* sick; if there hung over us the curse of a broken law, and we were so alienated from God as to be content in perpetual exile from his service and his fellowship; then both instruction and example, if nothing more were done, would be wholly lost upon me.

What can it avail to present truth or exhibit purity, before a mind that disrelishes moral beauty, unless provision is made to subdue the aversion of the heart? And even then, how could I be happy with the curse of a broken commandment pendent over my head? O, give me such a Savior as Paul describes, or when all is done, there is left undone the main thing requisite to my obedience and my blessedness. If the Lord Jesus Christ came merely to instruct me, so did the prophets and the apostles; and their example, had their hearts been perfectly holy, would have been all I needed on this point; and thus either of them might have been my Savior as really as he who is now frequently exhibited as the only Redeemer.

If I must be content with a Savior who is merely my school-master, I am led to ask, Why so much said of him previously to his advent? Did prophets anticipate his approach many thousand years; and martyrs hang their hopes on him so long; and angels announce his ingress, soon as the time was out; and spent the night by his manger; and a voice from heaven name him the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; and was this mighty personage, who so long held a world in agonized suspense, merely some teacher coming to do for us what any man, if commissioned, could have done as well? Is Jehovah accustomed thus to pour honor upon a creature, sent on an errand no more grand than this?

“Is ocean into tempest wrought,
To waft a feather, or to drown a fly?”

No man can have a very deep sense of sin, and not feel his need of having done for him more than all this. He who owes ten thousand talents, and has nothing to pay, will need a Savior who can take that debt upon him. He who has drawn upon himself the denunciations of his Maker's law, will need a Savior to bear that burden for him. He who has a carnal mind, that is enmity against God, is not subject to his law nor can be, will wish a Savior who can subdue that heart to loyalty and duty. And he who, after all this is done, dare not hope for heaven, unless taken by

the hand by some mighty Prince, and led every inch of the way till he is within its threshold, will inquire if no such Captain of his salvation is provided? And he will open his Bible, and read a single sentence, and there, the great God, even our Savior Jesus Christ, for whose appearing to judge the world his people are looking, is the very protector and friend he needs; "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." The text furnishes a natural division of thought, and will need the aid of no numerical distinctions.

Who gave himself for us. His presentation at the altar of justice, as our victim, was his own act. He is not seized and bound, as the barbarous nations secure their victims, willing or unwilling; nor comes to the altar as Isaac did, not knowing where the lamb was for a burnt offering. He had power to lay down his life, and power to take it up again. *Not merely was he given*, although this was true, but *he gave himself*. And it was not merely his *time*, and *strength*, and *patience*, that he gave, as instructors do, but his life. How easily could he have blighted all our hopes in that dark hour. Had he sent Judas to his own place, or rendered him an honest man, when he came to steal the betraying kiss; or had he struck lifeless that midnight band, that came to apprehend him; or had he let down into hell that senate chamber, with its mass of hypocrisy; and paralyzed the sinews of that soldiery that crucified him; then had there been none to betray, arrest, or murder the Lamb of God. And he had all this power in himself, else he did not *give himself*. He who goes to death without his choice, by a power, human or divine, that he cannot control, cannot be said to lay down his life: his life is taken from him.

But the Sufferer of Calvary, when he left the bosom of the Father, had his eye fixed, and through his whole life kept it fixed upon the scene of the cross, as the finishing act of his humiliation, and felt not that his work was done till he yielded his life. Hence, while it is true that the *Father gave his Son*, it is equally true that the *Son gave himself*. He was as voluntary in *redeeming* the world, as in the act that *built it*.

Who gave himself for us. Here each word has meaning. Who are we to understand by *us*? Not Paul himself and the good brother in the gospel to whom he wrote, merely. If another apostle may decide, the Lord Jesus Christ was "the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." I have no wish now to enter the list in that controversy,

which never should have been among brethren who hold the Head, whether the atonement, as distinguished from redemption, is *general* or *limited*. Those who do not distinguish atonement from redemption, must limit it, or avow the salvation of all men; and those who do thus distinguish, may with propriety make atonement general, and still are not accountable for a consequence, which is made to follow, not on their principles, but that of their opponents.

Is there not a common ground, where those who love the truth can and must meet? Neither of the parties to whom I now refer, assert, that God has purposed or will accomplish the salvation of all men, through the atonement of Christ; nor on the other hand, will deny, that the atonement places the human family at large, in circumstances happily differing from that of devils. To men there go out overtures of mercy, to devils none. But does it not follow, that if mercy is offered, and the offer sincere, salvation is possible; that is, the obstructions are removed on the part of God, that would have kept men from heaven, even had they repented? and this is precisely what I understand those to mean, who make the atonement general. The death of Christ rendered it possible for God to save, without dishonoring his law, or weakening his government, as many as it should please him to sanctify.

And what is the force of the preposition, *for us*? Can it mean less or more, than that the death of Christ was a substitute for our condemnation? This idea is certainly consonant with the whole drift of revelation. "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed:—the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all:—for the transgressions of my people was he stricken." Thus the griefs, and the sorrows, and the wounds, and the bruises, the chastisements, and the stripes, all fell on him by substitution, and were borne instead of the everlasting miseries of hell, which we must have borne, had he not offered himself as our ransom.

The apostle proceeds to make known to us the design with which the Savior gave himself for us, "*That he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us.*" There are here included pardon and sanctification.

First, pardon. The sinner can neither be considered as redeemed from iniquity, or purified, while his conscience is polluted with unpardoned sin. He is still under the curse of the law, has

the brand of infamy upon him, and the badges of death around him. Hence, when he believes, and pardon can be administered, without injury to the Divine government, his cleansing from the defilement of sin is begun. There is a text in one of the minor prophets, which though spoken with reference to the Church, is beautifully expressive of this first act of God's mercy to sinners. "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgressions of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighted in mercy. He will turn again; he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." And in another text it reads, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." And we have the delightful idea of forgiveness in this text, "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God." The very first act of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, secures this blessing, and we stand, though not on the same footing as if we had never sinned, yet the same as relates to our exposedness to the penalties of the law. The transgressions of the law, that had been minuted against us in the record of the Divine mind, are blotted out. God even speaks as if he would forget them, and never suffer them to come into his mind again.

But pardon, as rich a blessing as it is, to a sinner made sensible of his gross and dreadful departure from God, holds a place second in importance to that of sanctification. Hence to *purify us*, was an important part of the work which the Lord Jesus Christ came to do for us; by which I understand, delivering us from the power of sinful affections. This is done through the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit, and is ascribed to the Lord Jesus Christ, inasmuch as the Spirit acts a part in the economy of redemption, subordinate to that of the Mediator, and is spoken of as sent by him. He takes away the heart of stone and gives a heart of flesh, and creates us anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. Christ is formed in his people the hope of glory; his image is impressed on the heart; and the lineaments of that image are drawn out to view in deeds of loyalty and duty.

Thus the Lord Jesus Christ brings his people to feel like him, to love his character, his law, his government, and kingdom, and all the duties of piety, and benevolence. And his purpose and promise is, that where he has begun a good work he will carry it

on, till all moral pollution is eradicated. Thus the character of man, under the transforming influence spoken of in the text, is changed, till, in a moral point of view, he is no longer the same man. From being a child of wrath fitting for destruction, he becomes an heir of God, and a candidate for glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life. The desire to be holy, and so like his Master, becomes his ruling passion. In his estimation conformity to God, in the whole temper of his mind, is the greatest good; and no hope gives him such a joy, as when he can say with confidence, "Then shall I be satisfied when I wake with thy likeness."

While the followers of the Lord Jesus are thus under a process of sanctification, they become, as a matter of course in a world like this, a *peculiar people*. They have desires, and hopes, and enjoyments, and fears, and aversions, such as are found in no other people. They have another employment, and form other habits, and sustain new relationships, and enter new society, and in their speech and demeanor, embracing a thousand nameless things, become a peculiar people. Whatever pains they may take to conceal their peculiarities, they become and continue like no other people on the face of the whole earth. And the more they act in character; the nearer they live to their Master, the more sure are they to widen the contrast between themselves, and the world of the ungodly. Hence the world will soon know them, and break from their fellowship, and cast out their names as evil; and Christ will receive them, and be a God unto them, and they shall be his people.

They are *zealous of good works*. Here perhaps more than at any other point is seen their peculiarity. The promptness, the pains, and the sacrifices manifested in doing good, render them the perfect contrast of anything seen in the habits of unsanctified men. Hence the fact is not to be disputed, that the personal efforts, and charities that have been expended upon human misery, degradation, and contempt, have been the efforts and the charities of this peculiar people. On the list of this world's benefactors their names are arranged alone, and the catalogue will tell to their advantage in that day when the Savior shall be heard to say, "I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

The ungodly may have fits of charitable feeling, when provision is to be made exclusively for the life that now is; but their chari-

ties do not usually extend in their effects beyond the grave. When urged to enlighten those that know not God, or snatch from death those that have not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ ; they lack the faith that can give importance to these religious and spiritual realities. And yet here, where the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel, is the very spot where the godly display their warmest zeal, and make their best, their mightiest efforts. The zeal of God's people is uniform and extensive, and does not, like " crackling thorns and burning coals, make a great blaze and die." It grows out of the combined influence of the Christian affections, or rather *is* the Christian affections concentrated, and pouring out their energies upon the object of their commiseration or praise.

Christian zeal aims to render this world what God would have it ; to draw it back, from alienation and misery, to subjection and enjoyment. It would cure every species of plague and suffering, and render holy, respected, and happy every child of the fall. And when *men* need not its aid, would compassionate the animal creation, till not a worm should suffer. Thus will operate the zeal that piety begets, and thus the redeemed of Jesus Christ, will be rendered, in a world cold and friendless like this, a peculiar people.

There is still another thought in this text, which though *last* is not *least*. These redeemed, and peculiar, and zealous beings, Jesus Christ is said to purify *unto himself*. I see a very precious thought here : they belong finally to him. They were given him in the covenant of redemption. Hence we hear him say, in that remarkable prayer just before he suffered, " I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world." And lest any should draw a wrong inference from the fact that as Mediator he was a recipient, he addresses the Father again, and says, " All mine are thine, and thine are mine." His people are to be his associates for ever ; his family ; his friends ; his admirers, and his worshippers. " I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory."

There is something in this thought which to me bespeaks the Savior Divine. Were he a mere servant, were he less than the very builder and proprietor of this world, he could not have been given a commission of such a nature, as to entitle him to possess, and call his own, the beings he should save : else it would not be true, that the Eternal cannot give his glory to another. Thus the Lord Jesus Christ came to redeem to himself, by his death, a peculiar people, zealous of good works. I close with a few paragraphs of

EXPOSTULATION,

With such as cannot relish this mortifying gospel. I am fully aware, and lament it, that every position taken in this discourse is controverted; and my apology for the view I have given, is, that I could in honesty give no other.

Man's lost and desperate condition, requiring an atonement, is found in one shape and another, on almost every page of the Bible, and his safety depends on knowing it, and the gospel was sent to acquaint him with it; hence this must be a radical truth in every message which we carry from God to man. Moreover, we see men exhibit that temper, and form those habits, which would teach us their ruin, if we had not been taught it from heaven. Now a truth that comes to us so confirmed, we must receive, and must proclaim; and if men will not believe it, or if they do not choose to lay it to heart, we can only say with the prophet, "If ye will not hear, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride." If you can keep your apostacy a secret from your fellow-men, or from angels, or from devils, do; and if you can hide the shame of it, do; and if by such a course you can escape the dire consequences of that apostacy, do. We wish you safe, and wish you happy, and if you know of a *safer* or *happier* course than this gospel presents, you have but to make the experiment. But then remember, if your experiment fails, and you do not find out your ruin till death, you must not calculate that your mistake can then be corrected.

If you are conscious of some depravity, and still cannot make up your mind to owe your redemption to the death of Christ, then you must reject the Bible or explain it as you can. The text says he gave *himself* for us. And we hear him say, "I lay down my life for the sheep." And many scriptures that have been quoted, and more that might, seem evidently to put his blood in the place of ours, and heal us, if we are ever healed by his stripes.

Why object to the idea that he died for us. Does it too much degrade and blacken the human character, that we must thus come as it were to the place of execution, and have the halter about our neck, and there stand and see another take our place, and hang upon the tree in our stead? I know it will be the everlasting disgrace of our world, that we should have so conducted as to render it necessary that Christ should die for us. But it will deepen our disgrace, if we deny the fact, and assign some other reason, not the true one, why the Lord of glory was hanged on a tree. We shall crucify him afresh, and put him to open shame.

If *his* was not a vicarious death, why did he die? Do you answer, "Death hath passed upon all men for that all have sinned." Then it seems you make him a sinner? But the good Book assures me, that there was no guile found in his mouth. Satan came and found nothing in him. He was a Lamb without spot. Do you say that he died to finish out his obedience? Obedience to *what law*? Does the law of God require that his perfectly obedient subjects should die? or is death there made the wages of sin? I see no demand for his death, unless he died *for us*, or was a sinner. If you are not driven to the same alternative and can invent a third reason, more satisfactory, you must adopt it, and make the Bible bear you out in it if you can.

Do you object to this gospel because it requires that you be *purified*? Then it seems you doubt whether sin has polluted you? And if so why have any gospel? or do you choose to carry all your moral deformity with you into the grave, and into eternity? and if so, then we understand you. You have only to let the gospel alone then, and let others, who would not choose to die in their sins, have the benefit of its overtures.

A gospel that shall not render men holy, can be worth nothing. It may gather, and baptize, and cast the enclosures of a covenant, about a congregation of worldlings, but if it have no purifying effect, it will leave them still the children of their father the devil. They will be as fair candidates for perdition, when such a gospel shall have exerted upon them its mightiest influence, as when its first accent broke upon their ear. But a gospel like that which Paul preached, must urge the claims of the Divine law, and press men to break off their sins by righteousness, and turn their feet to God's testimonies. It will gather motives to holiness from all worlds, from the fear of hell, from the hope of heaven, from the comfort of the present life, and especially from the love of Christ; for it will "thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." Now let us be prudent enough to have this very gospel, or none. If we wish merely to be amused, let us not employ a gospel to do it, but the pipe, the timbrel, and the dance. If we care not how much pollution adheres to us when we are judged, then let us cast the gospel and the whole Bible from us, and enter into a covenant with death, and make an agreement with hell, and eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.

But you dislike the *peculiarity* urged upon believers in the gos-

pel. You wish not to be singular, and be cast out of the world while you remain in it. Well, we simply say, that there can be no gospel gathered from the Bible, that does not urge it, nor Christian character without it. If the truth must render men holy, it must, in a world like ours, render them *peculiar*. In two respects the good man, from the moment he is born of God, becomes unlike the men of this world. All the features of depravity that are cast from his character, and the features of holiness ingrafted on it, will tend to render him peculiar. Thus in two directions will the difference widen, and will go on extending through time and through eternity. To produce this peculiarity is the very design of the gospel; for men by nature are unlike God, and the gospel, when it produces its legitimate effect, renders men like God. Hence, unless it sanctify all men, or the regenerate are taken immediately to heaven, it must introduce into society a peculiar people. If you are offended with this peculiarity, then you need not put it on. You can live in this world without it, and you can die without it, but you can not live in heaven without it.

That *zeal* begotten in his people by the grace of God, constitutes I know the most offensive feature of their peculiarity. But God's people cannot be without it, and please him. And he has never promised to render his people what the world can admire. "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore shall the world hate you." You need have nothing to do with his people, or imbibe their zeal if it offends you. There is current a gospel, and you can attend upon it, that pours out against this zeal the whole torrent of its invective. It would nourish a cold philosophical religion, that shall never reach or warm the heart, that will have but little to do with prayer, or praise, or holy feeling, or heavenly aspiration, or effort to save souls; or take away, in any shape, the curse that has lighted upon this dark world. You can take your pew under such a gospel and never be urged to zeal and engagedness. But where it will conduct you, may demand a doubt. Not to heaven surely, where they cease not day nor night saying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory." There must be great zeal where there is such perpetual worship. *Day and night!* O, how such zeal as this would be lashed and scouted in this cold and cheerless world!

But the gospel of Jesus Christ aims to make this world as much like heaven as possible; would beget all the zeal they have there,

and all the industry, and all the celestial fire. We hide not our wish, to render men in this world as much in earnest in serving God, and blessing his creatures, as they are in heaven. And, sure as you breath, you have never seen a zeal like that in heaven. It was not in Paul, nor Peter, nor Brainard, nor Whitefield, nor Martin. And if you have ever once seen enough any where to offend you, depend upon it you could not stay in heaven an hour.

Finally, it offends you, that the Savior should be the proprietor of the Church he purchased with his blood. You would have him an agent, a prophet, a messenger; you would not allow him to own his sheep; you would make him an insignificant subject of that kingdom he purchased with his blood. And why this *zeal* to degrade him? Did he not earn the kingdom with his stripes, and his wounds, and his sweat, and his dying agonies? And did he not build the very world in which he has set up this kingdom? The apostle thought proper to speak of his purifying *to himself* a peculiar people.

And why not let them *be his*? Are *you* afraid to be his? Would it grieve you to be a member of his family, and have a seat at the supper of the Lamb? Well, dear friend, there will come a day when you will be afraid, if you are *not* his. When he shall come in the clouds of heaven, and all his holy angels with him, and the last trumpet shall have waked you from the sleep of the grave, then "he that believeth shall not make haste," but all others,—oh, with what hurry and confusion will they quit their sepulchres! and with what untold anguish will they call upon the rocks and mountains, to fall on them and hide them from the face that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb! Will you not then wish that you were his?

Ye disciples of the Lord Jesus, did it ever occur to you how precious a thought this is. You belong to this very Lord Jesus. "Ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." How safe and how happy, if he can make you so! and you have no fear but he can. Cast all your care upon him, for he careth for you. You will see him come directly to gather you, and you will hail him as he comes, "My Lord, and my God." My soul casts in her lot with you. We glory in belonging to Christ, and look wishfully toward that hour, when we shall see him as he is and be like him. Then, almighty Redeemer, then shall I be satisfied when I wake with thy likeness. Amen.

SERMON LVIII.

GOSPEL TRUTH DISTINGUISHED.

JOHN XVIII. 38.

What is truth ?

THIS question was put to our Lord by the miserable time-serving Pilate, who had no heart to love what he inquired after. He, and the whole multitude of the ungodly in all ages, would have the reputation of being the friends of truth. But when they have inquired what truth is, they are careful to turn away their ear from the answer. This one fatal error characterizes the whole human family, till the Spirit of God sanctifies the heart. Till then, they will not candidly examine the Bible, nor put themselves under the guidance of the Spirit of God, nor will love the truth when they know it. Hence to know and love the truth, is characteristic of a heavenly mind.

But the question still comes up, What is that truth which I must know and love, in order to have evidence that I am born of God ? The text would furnish a field too large for a single sermon, and must be diminished. *It will be my object to give you a few general characteristics of gospel truth.* In doing this, I shall name the particular doctrines no farther than may be necessary, to illustrate some leading feature of revealed truth generally.

I should choose to say in answer to the question in the text, What is truth ?

I. *Truth is that which is consistent with the main scope of God's word.* An insulated text or two, may seem to support what truth. By such means almost any sentiment may be drawn from the Bible, or from any other book. We could thus prove that "There is no God:" "Thou shalt not surely die:" "Thou shalt hate thine enemy:" "I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my own heart, to add drunkenness to thirst." Now you may fill a book with such insulated texts, but it would be all false: a lie couched in Bible language, but not the less a lie.

All the false doctrines, that have spread their plagues through

this ill-fated world, has thus originated, and been thus sustained. To him who is willing to understand it, the Bible is plain ; but to one who prefers delusion, and wishes to believe a lie, because he has no sure pleasure in the truth, the Bible presents it in that disconnected form, that he may wrest it, if he please, to his own destruction.

Still it will prove true, that when a tortured text has been made the basis of a false doctrine, that doctrine will not be sustained by the main drift of inspiration. It cannot be supported by other texts, without giving them a false and forced construction, and the whole system when thus built will be a baseless fabric. There will be many texts in the very face of the false doctrine, and in a greater number still its falsehood will be implied. But it will not be thus with truth. When you have fairly gathered any doctrine that God meant to teach, from any part of his word, you will find it asserted in other parts, implied in others, and in none contradicted.

Now apply this rule to any one doctrine, or system of doctrines, and it will assuredly assist you in discovering what is truth. The saint's perseverance, for instance, is clearly taught in this text, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way ; though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand;" and in this, "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord ;" and in this, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it, until the day of Jesus Christ ;" and in this, "The righteous shall hold on his way."

Now the doctrine thus taught in a number of texts of which I have quoted but few, has implied support in a far more numerous class still. All those texts which speak of heaven, as the final home of believers, imply the doctrine ; all those which make regenerated men the Savior's reward ; the promises made to believers, of help in the time of need, of victory in the hour of conflict, of escape from temptation, of light in darkness, of strength equal to their day, of guidance through life, and of hope in death. It is implied in that assurance of salvation which Paul had, and which every believer may have ; in the terms of the covenant, which is said to be *everlasting, well ordered in all things and sure* ; and in the

very nature of holiness, which immediately on taking existence in the heart, seizes heavenly objects as its own inheritance. And the doctrine thus supported *directly*, and by *extensive implication*, is nowhere contradicted.

Now bring any doctrine to this test, and if thus supported it is true. Upon the truth, light will shine from almost every page of inspiration. But we must be *candid* and *diligent*, or we may not hope to be enlightened. If men go to the Bible, determined to support a scheme of their own, it is by no means certain, that there is any lie, so obvious to detection, that it may not be thus sustained: for it is threatened, "For this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." If you still ask, What is truth? I answer again,

II. *Truth is that, after which men inquire humbly and prayerfully.* That was a good ejaculation of the Psalmist, "Open thou mine eyes, and I shall behold wondrous things out of thy law." All Bible truth is in its very nature humiliating to a sinner; hence there must be humility, or there can be here no possible evidence of that candor, which is necessary in researches after truth of any kind. And we shall pray while endeavoring to acquaint ourselves with God's word, because a desire to know the truth implies a heart to love it, and this implies a spirit of prayer.

All those men who have searched the most profoundly, after the mind of God, have been men of prayer. They made ample proficiency in their inquiries, because in the outset they imbued their souls with the spirit of the gospel. In answer to their prayers they had the teachings of the Spirit of God. It is only a mind opened by the Sanctifier for the reception of truth, joined to a heart softened and subdued by him, that can have any very exalted pleasure in becoming acquainted with those holy objects which the truths of God present. He will have a low opinion of his own wisdom, and will feel his need of Divine aid at every stage of his progress.

It is recorded of one good man, who is known to have made uncommon proficiency in his researches after truth, that he studied his Bible every day upon his knees. And of every good man it must be true, from the nature of the case, that he studies the word of God with his eyes directed toward heaven for Divine teaching. Between truth, and a humble prayerful spirit, there

is that indissoluble connection, that will justify the inference, that where the one is, there we may with great probability look for the other.

But the search for error requires no humility, and no prayer. He who forms his system out of his own heart, and goes to the Bible to have it sustained, will be too proud to let the testimony of inspiration alter it. He feels no need of light and asks none: would be afraid to pray, lest God should convince him that his favorite system is a lie. Hence inquire, would you know what truth is, what are the doctrines that men learn on their knees; feeling themselves ignorant, and poor, and blind, and naked, and in need of all things. And would you know what is not truth, inquire what doctrines are brought to the Bible to be compared with it, with a pride and a self-sufficiency, that scruple not to hew down any section of that book that will not quadrate with the favorite system; and prepared to proscribe the whole, if it assume any authority over the decisions of human reason. Do you still ask, "What is truth?" I answer,

III. *Truth is that which produces changes of character for the better.* God has told us plainly what is the design of his word. It was given to teach us, "that denying ungodliness, and every worldly lust, we should live soberly and righteously, and godly in this present evil world." Such then is the effect, that it is to be expected truth will have upon the human character; hence that which has this effect is truth. It was the prayer of our Lord for his disciples, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." And who will deny, that men are fitted for heaven, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth. This fact admitted, if we can ascertain what doctrines have been the means of making men better, we shall have learned what the truth is.

Where then do we look for the most frequent conversions? under what system? and under what men? The question amounts to this, What doctrines have been preached, and believed, where the Spirit of God has the most frequently and the most powerfully operated, in producing revivals? The men who have been the most favored, in seeing the work of God prosper under their ministrations, and have turned many to righteousness, what is their creed? Do they deny the atonement? or do they place it at the foundation of all human hopes? Do they acknowledge the Divine nature of Jesus Christ? Do they consider man so depraved, that his sacrifices are an abomination to the Lord; and his obsti-

nacy such, that God must take away the heart of stone, and give a heart of flesh, or there will be no repentance, and no obedience? Do they believe, or not, that God is a Sovereign, and worketh all things after the counsel of his own will? Do they credit the fact that God has prepared a quenchless fire, and a never-dying worm, for the punishment of the finally impenitent?

We do not deny that in some instances congregations have become acquainted with the truth, by other means than through the ministry placed over them, and that the truth thus acquired has produced awakenings; nor yet, that the *Bible alone* has been the means of saving men, notwithstanding the opposing influence of a false gospel. We ask what are the doctrines that have generated alarm, and have induced men to fly for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them in the gospel!

Will it be denied that these revivals, so called, have made men better. It will be admitted, that they have made some men worse, that the truth long and daringly resisted, has produced not a few of the most hard and desperate men, that have ever lived. There *have been* sore and alarming instances of relapse, that have cast whole Churches into deep distress.

But, this admitted, have not revivals produced very noted and numerous cases of reform? Have not the profane, the intemperate, the proud, and the false, been rendered virtuous, by some power that operated at these seasons? Now if it was God who wrought, it was truth he used: and whether you own or not, that the power of God produced the changes witnessed, you will hardly deny that the truth was the means: for it is not more unscriptural, than unphilosophical, to believe that falsehood will generate virtue.

Ascertain then whether the reception or the rejection of any given doctrine, or system of doctrines, is more generally attended by a change of character for the better, producing sobriety, morality, and benevolence, and the fact will aid you in your search after truth. I know there is much boast of morality, where doctrines are current, that are plainly at war with what the Bible seems very clearly to teach, but I know too that such boast is vain. The virtue that thrives under error is proud, and selfish, and cold, and often very malignant, and cruel; makes but few and small sacrifices, and is at the best a mere polished and civilized idolatry. It may drop a tear over the sufferings of the *body*, and be prompt to cure temporary distress; but can look with the indifference of a statue at the ruins of the *moral world*, and feels not a pang nor utters a groan, at the sight of six hundred millions

of souls sinking to perdition, and degraded and miserable all the way thither. It cares not who suffers through ignorance of God, nor is miserable through the lack of vision. We do not deny; if they like this picture, that such a morality *does prevail* where men have turned the truth of God into a lie.

But let us make a *high regard to the best interests of men*, the leading feature of morality, and then inquire where we find it. Does such a morality thrive under what is termed evangelical truth, or where this system is scouted, and libelled, and proscribed? If we see men, on embracing these doctrines become *better*, then believe them true, but if *worse*, then you may believe them a lie. Do you ask me still, "What is truth?" I answer,

IV. *Truth is that which distresses, and often offends ungodly men.* The character of God, and his people as far as they are like him, is built on the truth. But unholy beings, men and devils, have a character bottomed upon falsehood. They feel and act as they do, because in their esteem a lie is the truth. Hence the truth is at war with their character, their conscience, their pleasures, and their hopes. It holds before them a mirror in which they appear ugly to themselves, and see their need of a better character, in order to be accepted of God. It shows them that their stronghold is a house of straw. It exhibits them as playing the fool with their own best interests. A mad man, who in a paroxysm of his disease has butchered his family, and half dispatched himself, and has waked to consciousness in the very act of suicide, is scarcely a sorer picture of wretchedness and ruin, than a sinner upon whose conscience there has been poured suddenly the light of truth. It shows him that he is laboring hard to fit himself for irrecoverable ruin; and is heaping treasure together for the last days. His character must be altered, or the light shut out that shows him its deformity.

Now assure yourselves what doctrines bring ungodly men into this condition of distress, and you learn what is truth. On the other hand, if you will ascertain what doctrines offend and grieve the *good man*, you will learn what is *not* truth. Let me appeal to that part of my audience, who have yet no hope that they are born of God, but who have frequently felt alarm. On that night when you went home so unhappy from the place of worship, and wet your couch with tears, and roared, and was in anguish all night, what doctrine had been exhibited? Was it the entire depravity of the heart? or was it an attempt to prove, that you are not that

lost and ruined being, which this pitiless orthodoxy would render you? Was it Divine sovereignty? or a discourse that went to show, that when God had built the world he placed it without the limits of his empire, and left it to govern and watch over itself? Was it the doctrine of decrees? or an attempt to show that a sparrow may fall to the ground, and God *not* know it, and that the hairs of our head are *not* numbered? Was it election? or was it an effort to prove that the Father has not given any of our race to the Lord Jesus Christ, and that if he has, they may not come to him, and that many who do come to him may be cast out? Was it the doctrine of ever-during future punishment? or a train of reasonings that went to prove that the great gulf had been bridged over?

Go on, my audience, and apply this rule to other doctrines, to whatever extent you please, it will help you greatly in determining what is truth. Let us suppose a case, or rather state one that *has* happened. A sinner lies on the dying bed. There goes to him one in the character of a minister of Jesus Christ. But he tells the dying man, that he has no occasion to be much alarmed, that his heart is not *radically* polluted, that he must receive baptism, and forgive his enemies, and be willing to die, and all will be well. He is baptized!! The minister goes on; God is merciful, and Christ has died for sinners: there can be no doubt but the dying man will be soon in Abraham's bosom.—He retires, and another man, with far other views, takes his chair by the dying bed. He assures the poor man, that he has probably come to his last hours with a heart of enmity with God, and so obstinate in its enmity, that none but a power divine can subdue it; and that it must be sanctified very soon, or he perishes for ever. Still God has made no promise that lays him under obligation to effect this change, hence the man's eternal life hangs upon uncovenanted mercy. True a Savior has died for sinners, and God is merciful, infinitely merciful, but that atonement and that mercy, have conditions annexed, which must be complied with, or they avail nothing. The sinner must repent and believe in Jesus Christ; and God will give repentance unto life to whom he will, whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

I have thus given the *substance* of the instruction administered by the two legates. The dying man continues impenitent. Now *who* of the two gives him comfort, and *who* alarms and distresses him? He who gives comfort to one who is out of Christ, must deal in lies; he who distresses him, though he may not use the

mildest, best language, has the presumption in his favor, that he pours in truth upon an ungodly mind. God requires that we say to the wicked, that it shall be ill with them, and a message like this will not give them comfort, unless it prove the means of their conversion. Hence the irresistible presumption is, that he who gives *pain* to the dying sinner, and not he who gives *comfort*, makes use of *truth*.

And what thus gives *pain*, is very liable to give *offence*. Men are proud, and when the truth, from the necessity of the case, bears against their character and conduct, they scow. You cannot offer them mercy in the style of Scripture, but you convey to them a threatening, if they believe not. The gospel intrudes upon the sinner's pleasures, and pours unwelcome light upon his conscience, and, as he esteems it, degrades his character; tells him of a judgment he is loth to think of, and predicts a doom he hates to anticipate, a hell whose fires he would gladly put out, where there await him weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Ah, the truth tears from the sinner all his hopes of heaven, pulls down about his head his refuge of lies, breaks his covenant with death, and annuls his agreement with hell, and leaves him the prey of despair, till he raises one believing look to the hills whence his help cometh; and sure as life, all this, if it does not save him, will *offend* him.

If, then, you would test the truth of a doctrine, propose it to ungodly men, and watch if it gives offence. What effect has divine sovereignty, decrees, and election, upon such men? If they offend, the presumption is that they are true. Go to that man standing in the door of that grog-shop, reeling and cursing, with a glass in his hand, and name one of these doctrines; will it please or offend him? will it calm or enrage him?

Let me take another view. Christians have been much of their life ungodly. Did they generally love these hard doctrines before conversion or since? The doctrine of universal salvation; do men more generally believe this doctrine before they are regenerated, or afterward? You may thus bring to the test any doctrine or system of doctrines. That individual truth, or system of truths, which pleases more generally unsanctified men, is more likely to be false than otherwise. Error loves its child, *depravity*, and the child its mother.

I know that to make this experiment fairly, you must arrest attention. Men may be too stupid to be distressed by the truth, and may hold the truth in unrighteousness. The mass of inpeni-

tent sinners in our orthodox congregations, and who could not be persuaded to receive and support a loose and ungodly ministry, are on the side of truth, because they are thoughtless, or consider it disreputable to renounce the creed of their fathers. But every period of awakening draws out enmity, more or less, because it brings men to think. I doubt not but there is sufficient hatred to truth, in New England, to explode the gospel, and its ministry, and the Bible, and seal up the doors of every sanctuary, if God should remove restraint, and wicked men be generally aroused to thought, and see how at war truth is with their heart and their life.

There may be a kind of general acknowledgment of the truth, where it would be most cordially hated, were it so brought home to the conscience as to be strongly felt. Then it becomes manifest that the truth had previously floated merely upon the surface of the mind, and had not been opposed, because it had not been felt. Do you still inquire, "What is truth?" I answer,

V. *Truth is that which is consistent with itself, and inconsistent with all error.* Should two men appear in a court of justice, to bear witness to the truth, their testimony would agree, without any previous consultation. There might be many apparent discrepancies, but they could all be explained satisfactorily. Say it is a case of assault, that happened several months since. One affirms that the attack commenced in a house, on the evening of such a day; at the hour of eleven; the other places the scene of attack without the doors of that house, at the hour of twelve, and names another day of the week, another day of the month, and even another month. But the court perceives in a moment, that the attack might commence in the house, and be renewed without and that one of the witnesses might mistake wholly the time. Hence, finally, their testimony may substantially agree.

Now, although we would not place the seeming discrepancies of the Bible on the same footing, for here there could be no mistake, yet there are many apparent discrepancies. One apostle testifies that the *thieves*, implicating both, reproached the suffering Redeemer; another fixes the charge upon *one only*; while the truth probably is, that at the first both reviled, and finally but one; the other being sanctified; and the evangelists record what they saw and heard at different times. So when Saul was addressed by the Savior on his way to Damascus; one account is, that those who journeyed with him, heard the voice but saw no man; while another asserts that they heard not the voice of him that spake.

The truth no doubt is, that they heard a sound, but did not distinguish what was spoken. Many such apparent discrepancies are found in the sacred volume, serving, however, to corroborate its testimony. If men had agreed to lie, they would have been careful to have a perfect harmony in their statements, especially when their testimony was voluntary and deliberate. Truth is consistent with itself.

Now let us make application of the rule. If it be correct, then an entire change of heart is necessary only on the supposition that the heart is totally depraved; if regeneration be entirely the work of God, then man does none of it; no promise could insure heaven to the believer, and still he be lost; if God foreknows an event, that event is certain; sin requires an infinite atonement, if, in its nature, it tends to infinite mischief: thus one truth is consistent with another.

But between truth and error there is no such harmony. No court can reconcile a true and false witness. Error thwarts the track of truth, and its own track. It is a body opaque, that cannot light its own way, while truth surrounds itself with the light necessary to guide its course.

Let us look at one case. I take this position; God is the implacable enemy of sin; now reconcile this with the idea that there is neither a judgment nor a hell. It then follows, that the vilest men are often taken to heaven first: the people of the old world were at rest in the bosom of the Lamb, while Noah and his family had yet to weather many a dark and dreary night upon a shoreless ocean; the Sodomites went all up to heaven, while Lot was left to wander upon the mountains; Judas was glorified before John; and all those who shorten their lives by debauchery are sooner at rest than the virtuous. To such results are we driven when we would reconcile truth with error.

Take another case. The heart till renewed in regeneration is void of moral goodness. Now reconcile this with the idea that the unsanctified do any thing pleasing to God. The heart gives every moral action its character. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Hence a bad heart will give every moral act a bad character: the motives by which we act are in the heart, but if the heart of the sons of men be full of evil, then every motive is bad; hence every deed instigated by such motive is bad. How then can sinners do any thing pleasing to God? Thus truth and error at open war. They must not mingle in the same system, nor unite in governing the same heart; cannot have a place in the

same Bible, can have no fellowship, no harmony. They are the two contending powers that have so long distracted this fallen world, and the war will continue, without truce or treaty, till one or the other is exterminated; and which must perish, it is not difficult to decide.

And I might add, that error is equally inconsistent with itself. There is no such thing as a system of error. I could as soon conceive of harmony made up of a combination of discords. Hence we need not wonder that those who depart from the simplicity of the gospel, are driven about with every wind of doctrine. It *must* be so. They can never so mend up their system, that it shall suit them; but will alter it, and alter it, till all truth is excluded, and it has become a scheme of infidel morality. So we conceive of some comet that will not be governed by the laws of gravitation, and wanders from system to system, till no other world can be safe in its vicinity, and no sun will lighten it, and finally it goes out beyond the reach of suns, and there is in reserve for it the blackness of darkness forever. Ah, how infatuated men have been when they gave up one doctrine of the Bible, and supposed it would not essentially alter their creed! By that act they cast themselves off from their anchorage, after which there was no guessing before what storm they would be driven, into what latitude borne, or upon what cliff be dashed, and broken, and destroyed. O that men would be wise *sooner*, and fall on their knees, the moment they have taken up their pen to blot and interline their creed. It is only in the edifice of truth, that there can be a perfect unity from the foundation to the topstone. Do you still inquire, "What is truth?" I answer,

VI. *Truth is that which will stand the test of a close examination.* A man reports to you a fact which he witnessed. You have some doubt, and demand particulars. He goes on to state when, and where, and how the event transpired. He tells you why he was there; who else were present; the hour of the day; how long he was there; how many were concerned in the matter;—in a word, he will readily answer any question you put to him. And makes every statement fearless of contradiction.

Now a lie will not stand this pressure. Ask the man who comes to you with a *false report* all these particulars, and you will soon perceive that although he has marked out several steps, yet beyond these he moves with hesitancy. He has the particulars of

the lie to fabricate. Now all this will apply to gospel truth. Take an example.

Total depravity is proved by this text, "The carnal mind is enmity against God;" and this, "There is none that doeth good, no not one;" and this, "Every imagination of the thought of the heart is evil, only evil continually;" and this, "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil."

Now let us see if this doctrine will stand the test of a close examination. If it be true, men will be seen to act very basely; and this we see. If it be true men will need restraint, and will act the worse, the less restrained; and this is fact: "Thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldst." If it be true, nothing that the sinner does will please God: "Without faith it is impossible to please him." If it be true, God must renew the heart: "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." If it be true, the change will be great: "Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." If it be true, God must hate our native character: "He is angry with the wicked every day." If it be true, they will not relish it; and such is generally the fact. You may go on and press the doctrine as much as you please, or any other doctrine in the system of truth, and it will stand. Not the surf-beaten rock, that lines the shore of ocean, stands half so firmly as the truth. It will live and flourish, and will still be truth, when all its opposers have perished, and every rock is rolled from its bed.

And the truth will stand firmly without the aid of sophistry. It is when you attempt to establish a lie, that you must use false arguments. Hence there never was an orator, who could ably support the side of an argument, that is opposite to truth and righteousness. Take an example. He tries to prove that no plan guides the Divine operations. But there are a thousand facts, and the whole Bible, and the best conclusions of reason, all confronting him. Hence he makes no advances, till he affixes to the doctrine he would oppose, some odious name, calls it election, and suggests some mischievous consequences if it prove true, and casts about the hated doctrine a cloud of darkness and mysticism, and then, when his hearers are highly impassioned, and so blinded by rage, as not to see the weakness and wickedness of the orator, he plies his false and worthless arguments. It would destroy man's free agency. It would render the invitations of the gospel insincere. It would excuse every violation of the Divine law. Now there is not one of these arguments worth a straw, if he had

a candid auditory to enlighten. But one may as well attempt to convince a rock that it is hard, as to pour truth upon a mad congregation. The ear that should hear it is deaf, and the eye that should see it is blind, and what is worse than all, the heart that should feel it is biased.

But let one attempt to prove that God *has* a plan, and guides all his movements by it, and he may use solid and honest arguments. He may appeal to the unequivocal testimony of inspiration: to the attributes of God; to the impossibility of a wise intelligence operating without a plan; or to matters of fact, which show, unequivocally, that such a plan exists, and is going into rapid and successful operation. And when he has exhausted his substantial arguments, he need proceed no farther, for the truth is proved, and will stand without the prop of sophistry. And the same is true relative to any and every doctrine of the Bible. A mere school-boy can reason better in support of truth, than the wisest philosopher, when he would prove the truth of a falsehood. The very father of lies himself could never defend, successfully, any one doctrine of his creed. You still ask me, "What is truth?" I answer,

VII. *Truth is that against which all opposition is weak.* It must have opposers, in every world where there is depravity. But the Patron of truth is the mighty God; hence all opposition is insignificant. Truth could never be checked in its progress, by all the terrors of the dungeon, or the agonies of the stake and the cross. Every heretic that was executed during the reign of intolerance, promoted the triumph, and widened the spread of truth. At every scene of persecution, other hearts were sanctified, and other witnesses rose, as it were from the ashes of the martyred, to erect again, higher and still higher, the standard of the cross, and vindicate, more and more triumphantly, the honor of truth, and the glory of God. Opposition to truth warms its advocates, and produces a reaction, that carries the war back into the territories of the foe, eclipses the brilliancy, and humbles the triumph of his boasted victories.

Were it not for the reluctance we feel that men should undo themselves for ever, it could be wished, that error might ever have warm and able advocates, to call into action the friends of truth, and show the world that it has a light of its own, that can eclipse and consume every wandering star that would thwart its track. In its very nature truth is invulnerable and eternal. Its author is

God, whose character and whose throne is built on it, and who has pledged all in him that is sacred, that it shall exist and flourish commensurate with himself.

O, that its enemies did but know their destiny. When they shall have done their best, and cried aloud to their gods, and leaped upon their altars, and wounded themselves till they are covered with their own gore; then God will speak, and fire will come from heaven to testify to his truth, and devour its adversaries. No warfare has ever been so unpromising as theirs. The victory has never hung in doubt an hour. When the foe has been intrenching himself, and was proud of his forces, and sure of the victory; and the friends of truth lay on their faces between the porch and the altar, and could only say, "Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach;" even then, angels were not afraid, nor God afraid, nor, nor should faith have been afraid, that the truth might suffer. Do you still ask me, "What is truth?" I answer,

VIII. *Truth is that which never becomes obsolete, but is rendered the more illustrious by use.* It may at times seem obscured, and likely to become extinct, in some limited territory of this world, but it will come into credit again, and will pervade the very ground from which it seemed excluded. The human heart does not love it, and would destroy it, and has been making efforts to this effect ever since the apostacy; but the conscience, to whatever extent it has light, is on the side of truth, and often exerts an influence to give it countenance and currency, where it would otherwise be without a friend. Its light may be eclipsed, but cannot be extinguished. So the sun may suffer some little world to roll athwart its beams, and cut off a few fragments of its light from some other world, but the sun, when eclipsed, is not extinguished. While the ignorant multitude stand appalled at the brooding darkness, he emerges from behind the screen, and rolls and shines with unbroken velocity and undiminished lustre.

Some have believed, and many have hoped, that the Scriptures would one day become obsolete, and men be released from its obligations and its terrors. Poor souls, they think it a great grievance that there should be any sun to light the moral world. They would it were one unbroken night through all the territories of intellect. So we have known when the thief and the robber cursed the opening day as a nuisance, and were not ashamed to wish that the sun might cease to shine, and the moon and stars

withhold their light. But the prayer of the thief will not put the sun out, nor will the enemies of truth live to see the Scriptures perish. No, the *men* will perish, and the *arguments* that have stood in martial array against that book, while the book itself is destined to outlive all the nations, and will be in the hands, and deeply impressed upon the heart, of that last believer who shall rise to meet the Lord in the air. This great luminary of the moral world, will hold its station, and shine on in all its glory, and lighten and warm the beings it was sent to cherish, till the elect are all gathered in. Every doctrine of that book will outlive its foes, and will be embraced and loved by every believer that shall be sanctified through the truth. Wisdom is justified of her children. There is no danger, nor has there ever been, that any one doctrine of the Bible should be lost. No power but that which can build a world can stop truth in its course, and that power *will not*. Bury in one common grave every Bible that has ever been published, and let them lie till their mortal parts perish, still their doctrines, like so many imperishable gems, shall resist corruption, and emerge unhurt from the embers of the last conflagration.

By being controverted, truth increases its lustre. The attacks made upon the doctrines of the reformation, gave them currency. Men would risk their lives to see that book which was so much the dread of some of the ruling powers, especially the powers spiritual. Thus the eyes of a blinded world were opened the more effectually upon the glorious gospel of the blessed God. And all the efforts that have been made since then, or that may be made against the truth hereafter, have had, and will have but this one effect, to establish its friends in the more perfect belief, and the more full enjoyment of the precious Bible.

Truth is in most danger when its foes are asleep, for then its friends sleep too. "While the bridegroom tarried *they all* slumbered and slept." To drive his people to their post, God sometimes gives their enemies a temporary triumph; never, however, leaving it doubtful in the eye of faith where victory will rest. When infidelity threatened to deluge the world, God raised up a standard. And when it crept within the pale of the Churches,

" As when a prowling wolf,
Whom hunger drives to seek new haunt for prey,
Watching where shepherds pen their flocks at eve,
In hurdled cotes amid the field secure,
Leaps o'er the fence with ease into the fold;
Or as a thief bent to unhoard the cash

Of some rich burgher, whose substantial doors,
 Cross-barr'd and bolted fast, fear no assault,
 In at the window climbs, or o'er the tiles:
 So clomb this first grand thief into God's fold;
 So since into his church lewd hirelings climb,"

an eye Divine watched all its movements. And its defeat is now as certain, as when it libelled the entrance of the grave-yard, and daringly proscribed the Nazarine. God can recognize his enemies under whatever vestments they may conceal themselves. It requires only common faith to predict, that the Churches of our Lord Jesus Christ will not long harbor in their communion errors that dethrone their Master. In the present, and in every future conflict, the result will be as in the past. God will not suffer a flood of error to pour in, mightier than the standard he will lift up against it. He will continue for ever to be the friend and advocate of truth, and should the time again come when he must blot out a world to recover its influence, he has all his stores of wrath ready. Do you still ask me, "What is truth?" I answer,

FINALLY, *Truth is that against which an impenitent world is armed with objections.* I mention this characteristic of truth, because many conceive that nothing can be truth that meets with opposition. They act on the false supposition, that the world is friendly to truth, will readily embrace it when distinctly seen, and will object to nothing that is truth. Hence if they hear a doctrine objected to, in the belief of which they have been ever so well established, they feel it to be their duty to doubt its truth. And yet there is no doctrine against which there may not be brought a variety of objections. In the affairs of common life it would not answer to act on this principle, else we should believe nothing. There stands a tree by your door, and you affirm that it grew there. I object to your position, first, that such a mass of timber could never rise to such a height without hands; secondly, that earth cannot produce wood, as every effect must have the nature of its cause; and thirdly, the tree was never seen to grow. But do you doubt whether the tree grew there, because I have offered three objections to your faith? And if I could offer thirty, instead of three, would it shake your confidence? Then why are the precious doctrines of the gospel to be yielded on the first attack?

The fact is, and it is a fact that we ought to know, the truth is far more likely to be assailed with objections than error. There are more who are engaged in opposing *truth* than *error*, perhaps

ten to one. None but the true believer finds a real interest and a real pleasure in supporting the truth, while the great mass of ungodly men are strongly in the opposition. Hence all those whose hearts are at enmity with truth, are engaged, and have been ever since the apostacy, in fabricating objection to truth, while very few have endeavored to meet these objections with a proper answer.

And moreover when objections to truth have been invented, there are *ten* who will circulate them, where *one* will make the same sacrifice to disseminate the truth. Hence when a book or pamphlet full of error leaves the press, many, because they hate the truth, will purchase it, and give it circulation; but if there follow it an able answer, there will be few, perhaps none, who will make a similar sacrifice. Christians *should not be so remiss*, but it was long since declared, that "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." The fact then must be that *ten* will become familiar with objections to truth, where *one* will hear those objections answered. Against the truth then there will stand more objections than against error, hence a doctrine strongly and frequently objected to by unbelievers, has presumptive evidence of its truth. And perhaps, in a world like ours, truth has no test more infallible.

We shall be sadly mistaken, however, if we suppose that a mere profession will make men the friends of truth, and that all is error to which those who make profession are opposed. It not unfrequently happens that truth finds its bitterest enemies within the pale of the communion, and even in the sacred ministry. As there was a Judas in the apostleship, so in the gospel ministry there are men, O that it were not so, who bend all their energies to betray the design and to pollute the honors of their Lord.

But let us apply the rule. What doctrines are constantly assailed by unsanctified men? What doctrines are the drunkard, the liar, the profane, the swindler, and the Sabbath-breaker, ever prepared to repel? What doctrines has it been considered improper to preach, because of the numerous objections that stand against them, and which are supposed to destroy their usefulness? Ascertain those facts, and you learn what is truth. I close with

REMARKS.

1. *We see why the Bible in all its parts is so entirely harmonious, and has so long continued in use.* Writers so numerous, and so separated as to time, place, education, and habit, could not have written so harmoniously, but from the fact that they all wrote

truth, and nothing else, and truth is consistent with itself. And if the sacred volume by Divine direction should be continued, and an additional prophecy or epistle be written in every future age down to the last day, they would all agree. Each under the guidance of the Holy Ghost would write only unadulterated truth, and truth is consistent with itself. Hence the word of God, unlike every other book, can never thwart its own track, and can never become obsolete.

2. *We see why no other book can outlive a few short generations.* All others, although containing some truth, contain also error sufficient to bring them soon into disuse. Error is ever transitory. Let a book have been written if you please in the first age of the world, be it inspired or not, and let it contain nothing but truth, and that truth important, and it shall be fit for use till the funeral of the world, and shall be new and interesting to every succeeding generation of men. The character of God is pledged for the security of truth, and nothing else. It is as old as God, and will have a being commensurate with his. Its very nature is eternal. Truth is the reflected image of being and of fact. Hence ever since there was any being or any fact, and while these endure, truth must live. But error has attached to it no such immortality. Perhaps it would not be saying too much to assert that every un-inspired volume, has attached to it error sufficient to sink it sooner or later into the grave.

3. *We are now prepared to say, that one cannot reject the truth and be innocent.* The marks of truth are so visible, that one cannot mistake it but from choice. Its features are all prominent and visible, and must be familiar to every man who has made a proper use of his eyes and his understanding. Hence, to not know the truth, or embrace error, is sin, and argues a heart un sanctified. He who loves God must wish to know and love the truth. Christ viewed the truth of such importance, that he came into the world to declare the truth, and will now frown upon the man who diminishes its value.

It is absurd to suppose that truth has a character so doubtful that it cannot be known. If God has placed his statute-book in our hands, he will expect us to be familiar with the laws of his kingdom. He has not furnished us an unintelligible code. He has not suspended our destiny on a belief of the truth, and yet left it so uncertain *what we should believe*, that it is no crime to believe a lie. The Holy Ghost would not inspire for us a volume which we cannot understand. If God sanctifies his people through the

truth, there is not the same hope that those are bound for heaven who believe a lie, as those who believe the truth. We cannot be sanctified through that truth which we do not embrace. Hence it would seem that it must be fatally criminal to reject the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel.

4. If the definitions which I have given of truth be correct, sinners ought to wish to hear those doctrines which they do not relish, and which fill them with distress, for none else are true. It would be easy to preach so as never to distress or offend impenitent men, but it would not be the gospel, and the preaching would be useless. They would sleep under it till they waked in perdition. They would neither quarrel nor repent. There are such preachers, and the effect of their labors is exactly what we should expect. Their "burden of the Lord" is a mere heathen morality, and the best effect a mere reform of some grosser vice, leaving the moral character unbleached, and the heart unchanged.

But it should be the wish of perishing men to hear another gospel, one that will alarm their fears, cut off their false hopes, arouse their consciences, and renew their hearts. It is pleasant to find that men are *pleased*, but far more important to find that they are *sanctified*. And those act a very weak part, who are conscious of impenitence, and yet prefer a gospel that is not truth, and can never point them to heaven.

Finally, the subject will help us to account for the stability of the Christian character. It has its foundation in truth, the same that is the basis of the Divine character, and of the throne itself of God. So the character of angels, and of all holy beings, is built on the truth. Hence a holy character will differ as to its permanency, from the character of the sinner, as much as the truth differs from falsehood. Every Christian principle is some truth of God, every grace some impress of truth upon the heart. Hence we expect the Christian character, and no other, to have permanency, unless that truth could become mutable on which it is founded. Christ styles himself *the truth*, and is that rock on which his people build their character and their hopes: "Christ in you the hope of glory."

Hence the believer, though "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation," has a permanency of character, from the fact, that God sanctifies him through the truth. He grows in grace and in the knowledge of the truth; and to whatever moral stature he attains, truth secures his standing, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a

perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Thus it is made certain that the saints shall never fall.

But we do not wonder that those who have no such idea of the permanency of truth, doubt whether the believer will assuredly persevere. Those who suppose him to build his house upon the sand, must fear, lest when the floods come and the winds blow, its foundations be removed, and it fall. But he builds upon a rock, firm as heaven itself, and we shall see him safe, when every other rock, but that which he makes his foundation, is melted down; and when those who have not built on Christ and on truth, "shall call upon the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and hide them from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb."

May God bless his truth, to the sanctification of his people; and make them zealous to learn it, and to propagate it. May he give us a high esteem for our Bibles, and Sabbaths and sanctuaries, and a preached gospel, by the aid of which we learn truth. And may he sanctify his ministers, and leave none of them to "depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." And may he through the truth glorify his own name, and prepare a great multitude, that no man can number, to worship about his throne for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON LIX.

THE CHRISTIAN'S BEST FRIEND AGGRIEVED.

EPHESIANS IV. 30.

Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.

IF I must doubt whether there be a trinity of persons in the Godhead, I should question the inspiration of the Scriptures. The distinct personality of the three that bear record in heaven, seems to me as plain a truth as any other in the whole Bible, and cannot be rejected without the danger of going into infidelity. In the mysterious division of the work of redemption, it became the business of the Holy Ghost, to make the sinner willing, in the day of God's power, to renew and sanctify the heart, and quicken to spiritual life and action, the dead in sin. And after he has begun eternal life in his people, he dwells in their hearts, and is there a well of water springing up to everlasting life.

The Holy Spirit was promised to the apostles under the title of the Comforter, and has exerted his agency in every conversion since there was a Church, and been the guide to heaven of every child of the apostacy, who has gone and took his seat at the marriage supper of the Lamb. If there is in any mind a heavenly thought, or in any heart a holy volition, it is all the work of that Divine agent. Hence his favor is life. One had better grieve every friend he has, and wander homeless, and die deserted, with none to watch him or to pray for him, or bury him, than to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, and be abandoned of him.

I have supposed that grieving the Spirit of God, was a deed that none but Christians can do. The enemies of God may *resist* his Spirit, and may *quench* his Spirit, but his people only can grieve him. So it is, you know, in human affairs; an enemy may insult us and offend us, a *friend* it is that grieves us.

It will be my object to show how the people of God may grieve his Spirit, and what the consequences that must follow.

I. *How may the people of God grieve his Spirit?*

1. When they *limit his ability* or his *willingness* to bless them.

The Spirit of God has done so much for them already, that all cause of fear, as to what he can do, and will do, if they are ready, is out of place. It was a great sin in Israel, after they had witnessed the wonders done in Egypt, and has seen the water of the Red Sea divide, to make them a passage, to have any doubt whether he could enable them to subdue the Anakims, and whether he would give them water to drink and flesh to eat.

But that people, when they limited the Holy One of Israel, had not seen more illustrious displays of the might and the mercy of their Deliverer, than have the people of God in these days of the amazing power and grace of the Holy Ghost. He who could subdue your hearts, ye disciples of the Lord Jesus, what can he not do for you? He who could awaken you, when you was purposed in your heart that you would never see the danger you were in; who could uncover to you the destruction that way-laid you; who could convict you of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come, when you had carefully barred every avenue that would admit the light; could bring out to a Savior's feet, and make you his willing captives; what is there now he cannot do for you? What lust can he not conquer, and what foe of yours can he not bring to the ground and lay low at your feet? How can you doubt a moment of his ability and his mercy, to guide you, and keep you unto everlasting life?

And after the precious instances of revival that you have witnessed, and the power displayed by the Holy Ghost, in subduing to love and obedience the basest of men, and bringing scores of the ungodly to yield to the force of truth, and become willing in the day of God's power; how can you doubt but he can give you other precious revivals, and renew to you the scenes you have witnessed, and more yet? What other proofs can he give but that which he has given, that you have only to be ready and he will do his wonders before your eyes, till you are satisfied? And there is no sinner you pray for but he can be melted and subdued, and moulded over into a humble and devoted and heavenly-minded Christian? And his willingness to operate is commensurate with his ability. If he would help *you* when you felt that you could not do without him, and give those tokens of his mercy that you felt you must have or die, why will he not do the same again? If you have sinned, and do not deserve his interposing mercy, so you had when he did interpose the last time. When you prayed for that child that he did save, you went to him as a poor sinner, not deserving at all the mercy you asked, and why not expect that the

Spirit of God will as readily operate now as then? Why then should we limit, and thus grieve the Holy One? If such has been the power and the mercy of the Divine operations in days past, that the highest faith is due, and there is the broadest foundation for confidence that the Spirit will operate as soon as we are ready, why should Christians grieve him by limiting his power and his mercy.

2. They grieve him *when they expect their comforts from any other source*. The people of God often try to be happy without him. There are so many channels through which joy is communicated to the heart, that we are prone to forget its source. We may, by this means, be guilty of an idolatry, though not as gross, yet as offensive to the Spirit of God as the temporary worship of Mammon or Moloch. This is the case when even means of grace are trusted in as sure to communicate comfort. We may idolize the ministry of reconciliation, the Sabbath, the ordinances, the place of prayer, and even the closet. In young converts nothing is more common than the deep assurance, that the same place, the same practice, and the same pew, will produce the same blessedness. And often it is not till after many a sore disappointment, that they are taught to repair immediately to him whose influence is life and peace. God would have us estimate the means, and set a price as high as he has upon every medium of holy joy. But when we forget, as we are prone to forget, that we must go a little beyond the watchman, before we shall find him whom our soul loveth; must pass through the means and *there* is joy, and *there* is God, then is the Spirit grieved. His Divine agency is undervalued, and the joy he would communicate is withheld, till we are made to feel that the Spirit of God must operate; or every means must lose its influence.

3. It is equally true that we grieve the Spirit of God, *when we neglect the means of grace*. There is an established process, by which the Holy Spirit of God ordinarily comforts his people. *Almost all his joys*, and probably, did we know more fully the way of the Spirit, we should say *all his joys*, are bestowed as a blessing on the means of grace. Here he exerts his Divine influence. He lifts the soul toward heaven, when the soul makes an effort to rise in prayer. He pours in truth upon the mind, when the mind is laboring to know the truth. He generates holy affections, when he discovers in his people grief for sin, and ardent desires to be more holy. Hence the house of God, rather than any other place, has been the scene of his most frequent and his mightiest opera-

tions. Here he has fed his people, has cheered their despondencies, has raised their hopes, has strengthened their faith, has enabled them to mount on wings as eagles, to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint. Here, with a preached gospel, the word of his grace, that truth through which it was the prayer of the Savior that the Father would sanctify his people, he has, in every age, since there was a Christian Church, shed forth his richest, sweetest comforts. Here, too, he has awakened and renewed the sinner; has begun in the heart that eternal life which it is his promise, and his oath, shall be carried on till the day of complete redemption. Here all our precious revivals have begun, and have been carried on, by what has been termed the foolishness of preaching.

And God has greatly blessed the place of *prayer* and *conference*. These unnoticed retreats have been, in thousands of instances, the scenes of such Divine display as have made angels glad, and have multiplied the number of the saved. Christians have dated their very best comforts in some of these consecrated retreats. In answer to prayer, every comfort has dropped from heaven. The heart has been warmed in the concert of prayer, beyond almost any other place. Those hours nearest akin to heaven, and the most deeply engraved upon the memory and the heart, to be the subject of everlasting recollection, and of delightful mention in the anthems of heaven, have been those where pious hearts met, and were melted together at the foot of the cross—unless it be those seasons when the soul was alone with God, while there were none to disturb and none to share the sacred joy. Perhaps no comforts can outweigh these. Hence the closet is that most sacred and most lovely place which the believer is the last to quit, where he would live and die. There the heart discloses its most secret concerns, delivers its most confidential message, and waits for forgiveness and for peace, with a hope that takes hold of the horns of the altar with the iron grasp of death.

If, then, God has thus blessed the means of grace, and they are rendered by his appointment so essential to the soul's transformation into the image of God, the Spirit must be grieved when they are neglected. Their neglect develops unbelief, and, what is more, contempt. If the Spirit operate, he must choose his own way. We must throw ourselves within the probable reach of his influence, where he has blest others, and where he has promised to bless us. And not only be there *occasionally*, but as often as we feel our need of his special influences. David resolved to pray

seven times a day, and Daniel three *times* in the day, even when he knew that it would be likely to cost him his life. Christians cannot lightly dispense with any means of grace, and not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby they are sealed unto the day of redemption.

4. Christians grieve the Spirit of God *when they neglect to make use of the promises*. These were given for the comfort of God's covenant people, were indited by the Holy Ghost, and are the principal medium through which he communicates to the heart the richest blessings of his agency. Here the Christian must apply when he needs support, and he will find the promises wonderfully adapted to his circumstances. If he feels himself to be a great sinner, here is a promise of forgiveness; "I will blot out thine iniquities, and remember thy sins no more." If he feels himself to be weak and defenceless, the promise reads, "Fear not thou worm, Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the holy one of Israel. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument, having teeth: and thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. One shall slay a thousand, and two shall put ten thousand to flight." If darkness come over his mind, and it ever becomes at length tangible, like the night of Egypt, still the promise reads, "He that walketh in darkness and hath no light, let him trust in the Lord, and stay himself upon his God." If he fears that he may perish amid the dangers that surround him, he may read and be comforted, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee." If there come an hour when temptations seem too sharp and frequent for his strength, he can read and feel safe. No temptation has happened to you, but such as is common to men. And God will, with the temptation, make also a way of escape. Now the child of God offends the Divine Comforter, when he does not thus apply in the hour of distress to the promises he inspired.

5. The Spirit of God is grieved *when the promises are misapplied*. When the promise of forgiveness, for instance, is used before we have repented; when the promise of perseverance is made to comfort a backsliding believer, when anything that God has said engenders a hope of heaven, while the affections are earthly, sensual and grovelling. When the *unbeliever* takes sanctuary in the mercy of God; and when the Christian hopes to be comforted any

where but on the way of life, there is offered equally an insult to the Spirit of grace. The gracious things said in the book of God are all *appropriated* in their promulgation. The meek only will be guide in the way and cause to inherit the earth. To the poor in spirit belongs the kingdom of heaven. They that mourn shall be comforted. To those only who keep his covenant and his testimonies, are all the ways of the Lord, righteousness and peace. Those only who trust in the Lord and do good shall inherit the land, and shall verily be fed. Those shall know the Lord who follow on to know him. Those shall find him who seek him with all their heart.

After the same manner are all the promises appropriated, and may neither be neglected nor misapplied. Hence every man who would not grieve the Spirit of God, should make it his *first* question, What is my character? and his *second*, What kind thing has God said to me? or his *first* question, What is my condition? and his *second*, What promise reaches such a condition? Then, to use the emphatical language of Scripture, the dogs do not eat the children's bread. There are times, I apprehend, when the real believer may not apply to the refreshment of his soul a single promise, but must let the Bible lie by him, as the offending child, faint and hungry, may take no refreshment from his father's table. He must suffer and fast till he is humbled. The promise is ready for him, and God will refresh him with it, when he has brought him to feel that he must die without it. To this spot God delights to bring his people, when they sin. His kindness is thus the more timely and the more welcome.

II. I am next to notice the *consequences of grieving the Spirit*. These will appear,

1. *In the absence of Christian consolations.* When we have grieved the Comforter, how can we hope that he will bestow his comforts? When he has brought his blessings to our doors, and we treat him with contempt or neglect, he will leave us to pore over our miseries, and perhaps, to howl upon our beds. How striking a feature is this in the history of God's people, recorded in his word! David grieved the holy Spirit of God, and we hear him complain at the noise of the water-spouts. Deep calleth unto deep. All thy waves and thy billows are gone over my soul. He wet his couch with tears. All his bones were out of joint. God broke him with his tempest. He was made to bear the iniquities of his youth.

And how well has all this accorded with the experience of God's people in all ages since, when they have grieved the Spirit. He withdrew his consolation. They fasted, and prayed, and wept, and God hid, as it were, his face from them. Wearisome nights were appointed unto them. They looked toward death with gloominess. Toward heaven they cast the fearful glance of abandonment. They clinged to the covenant as a drowning man to the plank floating by him.

2. When the Spirit has been grieved, it appears *in the withering of the Christian graces*. The Spirit of God is the grand agent, by whose influence every holy affection is nourished. Hence his influence upon the heart compared to the rain, on which nature is dependant for all its beauty, and all its fertility. Let the showers be withholden, and how soon will every field and every garden wither! How soon will the sterility of death cover the face of creation, and the veriest Eden be converted into a desert! How will the plant wither, and the landscape fade, and culture become useless when there no longer falls the timely and refreshing shower! So faith, and love, and hope, all fail, when the Spirit of God has been grieved. There can neither be seen the humility, nor the heavenly-mindedness, nor the spirit of prayer, nor the watchfulness, nor the meekness, nor any of the other graces which stand out to view, when the Spirit of God is operating. The life-giving breeze does not blow upon the garden, causing the spices to flow out. The Christian, when he has grieved away the Spirit of God, becomes, for the time being, merely a decent worldling, rising but one small degree above the man who was never born of God. His lamp, if it may not be said to have gone out, dies away till it casts hardly a ray of light into the darkness of this revolted world.

3. When the Spirit is grieved, one of the effects is *the loosening of the bonds of Christian affection*. This affection originates in love to Christ; hence, if that love decays, all the affections that depend upon it, suffer a correspondent decay. Christ is the head by which all the limbs are united, and live and act in unison. He is the vine. Amputate the branch from the vine, and it immediately loses its connection with all the other branches. What is the *believer to me*, when I have no longer any interest in him who is the believer's life? Now if there be not, and this is not pretended, a final abandonment of the covenant, still if covenant engagements are disregarded, and he whose agency is to see the covenant ratified, withhold his influence, why expect any union among those whom it was intended to bind? Sink the believer down into the

the man he once was, and why expect he will wish any other than ungodly men for his associates? The union of God's people to each other will ever bear an exact proportion to the growth and vigor of their piety. Hence, in the absence of the Spirit's sanctifying influence, there decays, with the other graces, love to the brethren, and the ligature is sundered that holds together the family of the the faithful. Hence all the discords, the divisions, and the broils; the hard names and the angry feelings, that have sundered believers.

4. *When the Spirit is grieved the Christian becomes a worldling.* Losing his heavenly hopes and his celestial comforts, there remain none but earthly hopes and creature comforts. The Christian is not only made to differ from the man of the world at the first, by the agency of the Spirit, but this difference is continued by the same agency. Just like a weight suspended in the air, he sinks the moment he is not supported. The graces which the Spirit generates makes the difference; these suspended and the resemblance returns. Clip the wings of the dove, and what is she but a reptile? She must tread upon earth, and gather her food in the dust. The man is not willing to be destitute of comforts. If he may not eat the bread of heaven, he hankers after the leeks and onions of Egypt. When the first king of Israel found that the Lord did not answer him as aforetime, he sought to the witch of Endor for the guidance he needed. The Lord's people are a miserable set of beings, when the Spirit has departed from them. They will need, to make them happy, all the worldly prosperity they had before, and more yet, and will covet it as eagerly as the man who has never risen with Christ, nor has ever learned to seek those things that are above.

5. *When God's people have grieved the Spirit, he ceases to multiply their numbers by the conversion of sinners.* He has so honored them as to operate in answer to their prayers. I will be inquired of by the house of Israel to bless them. When Zion travails she brings forth children. God works by means; and when the people of God become backsliders, the means cease, and the work of God is stayed. He thus puts honor upon his people; makes them the instruments of doing him service, and has himself the pleasure of rewarding them. They would be less happy if God had given them no opportunity to labor in his service. Hence, when they have grieved the Holy Spirit of God, and he has withdrawn his influence, and as a sure result, they have lost their relish for his service, he suffers sinners to sleep on and perish. It is considered

an established matter of fact, that God *does not*, and the presumption is that he *will not*, revive his work, till *his people* are revived, and are ready to be workers together with God. Believers then are urged not to grieve away the Divine influence, by all that a soul is worth, and by all that a multitude of souls are worth. And if, in an evil hour, the Spirit has been grieved, they are urged to repent, and humble themselves at his feet, by all the importance that could possibly attach itself to a precious and extensive work of God, among the ungodly around them.

REMARKS.

1. *Believers can do nothing that is at the same time so great a calamity and so great a crime as to grieve the Holy Spirit.* They feel the injury first themselves, in their languishing graces, and their loss of comforts; in their beclouded prospects, and their diminished hopes. Nor would it be a conjecture wholly groundless, that they may be affected in their interests for ever, by every season of relapse. They may be thus rendered lesser stars in the firmament of God for ever. And how many souls may perish by the deed, we cannot know, till the season of action is past, and the character of all around us formed and finished, and their destiny about to be fixed.

2. Let me say that *God's people may easily know when they have grieved away the Divine Spirit.* He will carry away all his comforts with him. They will be happy in none of those things that once contributed to their joy. There will be no communion kept up with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. All intercourse with the throne of grace will be interrupted, and darkness will come upon the believer as soon as he begins to pray. No matter when he attempts the duty, the place will be dark. There will fall neither rain nor dew. The heavens will be brass, and the earth iron under his feet. And the circulation of a heavenly influence between him and the family of believers will be interrupted, and there will be a suspension of Christian fellowship. And there will be no visions of heaven. There will cover the sun of righteousness a cloud, dark and black as midnight. The believer will now grope his way as the blind do, and stumble at noonday as in the night. Those horrid falls, that have crippled and half destroyed the children of God in all ages, have happened when the Spirit had been grieved away. David and Peter had grieved the Spirit when he left them to stand in that critical hour alone. The spouse in

the song had grieved him away, when she went about the streets inquiring, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?"

There is but one source whence come all the believer's comforts, *from* the influence of the Divine Spirit. Hence, if he is grieved, the spring of his consolations is dried up, and he must assuredly famish, if this fountain is not again opened, as the word of God is true. Hence it would seem that the believer can easily know if he has done this disastrous work; can know by the poverty, and misery, and desolation of his soul; by the total absence of all those consolations that used to be brought to him by the operations of the Holy Ghost.

3. *On the conduct of believers depends the welfare of the world.* If on them it depends under God, whether the multitudes of the ungodly continue to throng the way of death, then it cannot be denied that they can withhold, or can put forth an agency that affects the weal or the wo of a world. While then you sleep—ye redeemed of the Lord—while you sleep, and your graces droop, and your character suffers, and your lamp goes out, there lies around you a depraved and prayerless multitude, who are forming a character for the pit, and pursuing their way down to the prison of hell, to the blackness of darkness for ever.

4. *It should then be the wish of the men of the world, that God's people live near to him.* They sometimes imagine that it is better with them when believers let down their watch and become like themselves. Then their consciences do not reproach them, and they have not such fearful alarms, as when the people of God come out from them, and are separate. Still they never make a more fearful mistake, than when slumbering on the brink of ruin themselves, they wish all around them to sleep also. If it is their horrid purpose to keep their stand on the brink of death eternal, they should be as wise as the Macedonian, and appoint *one at least* to stand at the door of their dormitory, and cry, day by day, Wake, O sleeper!

5. *Hence the propriety that Christians should often inquire of themselves, whether they are acting a kind part toward the ungodly.* What was said in Israel, in a time of national calamity, may apply, in a time of the withdrawal of the Divine influence. "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." I have frequently thought of this text with pleasure, and have styled it a recipe for a revival. I have thought it

a pity that any Christian should live without a knowledge of this precious part of the word of God, it is found in 2d Chronicles, vii chapter and 14 verse. Not only is the Minister of Christ set to watch for souls, but, in a very important sense, *every believer* is a watchman, and cannot sleep, but he endangers the souls of men. Instead of this, it should be his object to keep every conscience around him alarmed, till the lost are all seen flying for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them in the gospel. They may not sleep while there is one lost sinner within the sound of their voice. If believers would not bring blood-guiltiness upon themselves, and calculate by and by to complain to God, "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over my soul," then they should not sleep as do others, but watch and be sober. There hangs in the vigilance of God's people an amount of interest that outweighs the wealth of a city, and the wealth of a world. Their responsibility is greater than the out-guards of a camp of soldiery, when, if one sentinel should fall to sleep, it might cause a whole army to perish.

6. But in these circumstances, *what can the Christian do to recover his former condition?* Why, just what he did when he first found himself a lost sinner—repent. "But," says the poor benighted and comfortless soul, "How can I repent without the influences of the Holy Ghost? and I have grieved him away." Then here you are my brother, at the mercy of God. Lie down and determine to die, if you must, full in this conviction. The Churches' hope of you is wholly in the provisions of the covenant. I will turn you to a leaf or two of that covenant: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah." Here it reads, you see, "*I will be their God and they shall be my people.*" He does not intend to let his people go. They would, if he would let them, and perish every soul of them, even after he has forgiven them, and they have been permitted to gaze upon the glories of the Lamb. Let me turn you to another leaf of that compact. "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, *that they shall not depart from me.*" On another page of this covenant, it reads, "My salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished." And there is one other page, if possible still more precious, "And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart." I will read you one other line of that

wondrous compact, which God has made with his people, and leave you to read and ponder on the residue : "If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments ; then I will visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips." Thus are you shut up to the covenant mercy of God, and here is the safest place to leave you. If you have been his children, and have grieved away his Spirit, still his unbounded mercy can reach you. He can restore to you the joy of his salvation, and then uphold you with his free spirit.

SERMON LX.

TERMS OF DIVINE ACCEPTANCE.

ACTS XVI. 30.

Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

PAUL and Silas, in the faithful discharge of their duty, found themselves at length immured in the dungeons of Philippi. There they lifted up their voices in prayer and praise; and the prisoners heard them; and what was to them of far higher importance, God heard them, and sent his angels to deliver them. The bars of their prison were sundered, their doors flew open, and their bands were loosed. The result was, a deep alarm fastened upon the mind of the prison-keeper, venting itself in the language of the text, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Now the gospel aims to bring *every man* to the very spot where that man was brought, and then direct him to a Savior and to heaven. There must be alarm, because there is danger, unless in those, perhaps very rare cases, when a Savior is embraced, or rather the heart prepared to receive him, before the danger is fully discovered. Unless we see our danger we shall make no effort to escape from the wrath to come. And men will have so soon slept the sleep of death, and alarm be of no avail, that humanity requires every possible effort to wake them.

Hence, no curse can be greater, than a ministry calculated to keep men secure in their sins. At no other point does there await you so much danger. Your servant may be idle, and your steward defraud you, and your best friend betray you, and still you may suffer but a temporary loss; but if he who is the mouth of God to you, deceive you, put darkness for light and light for darkness, your loss may be irreparable.

In the report of that gospel which the Lord Jesus Christ will approve at his coming, the text must be fully and correctly answered. The sinner must know exactly the terms on which God will accept him. One may have some general notion that he is a sinner, that a Savior is provided, and that possibly he may have life through that Savior; and still be so much in the dark relative

to the terms of acceptance, as to miss of eternal life. 'The mere fact that a Savior died, if fully known, is not sufficient to secure salvation. The bare atonement, if there be no application of it to the soul, will avail nothing. Christ fulfilled the demands of the law in behalf of all who, in the appointed way, shall become interested in his blood. But if this atonement be neglected; if we listen to a gospel that on this point misdirects us; and we do not become qualified to enjoy salvation, it will no otherwise affect us, than as an aggravation of our condemnation. My plan will be, to show what is not adequate instruction on this subject, and what is.

I. I am to show *what is not adequate instruction on this subject.*

1. When men are urged to a *reformation*, as what will put them into the way of life, the instruction is inadequate. If men quit their grosser iniquities, and become decent and civil, still no promise of heaven reaches them on this condition merely. Where in the gospel are any such terms stated? I know that men are obligated to break off their sins by righteousness, forthwith. John directed some bad men who came to him, to cease from violence and become honest, and contented: but John did not mean to leave them here: hence he did not say, that on these terms Christ would receive them. These were rather the conditions on which they could be prepared to receive his instruction to advantage. If I should meet with a drunkard, or a thief, and they should ask me about the gospel, the first lessons I should give them, would be on the subjects of sobriety and honesty. Men are sometimes too far gone in the by-paths of death, to give the gospel a candid hearing, and learn what the terms of salvation are; and then the first lesson given them may have respect to their waywardness; and when the gospel has gained this footing, then you may tell them of salvation to advantage.

But there may be this external reformation, and there often has been, while yet there was no preparation of heart to receive the Savior, but sin was loved, and rolled as a sweet morsel under the tongue. Men may quit their sins from motives of interest or ambition. Gross iniquities are scandalous and expensive, and may be abandoned from the supreme love of something else beside Christ.

The fear of the wrath to come, while yet there is a prompt and a total alienation of the heart from God, may induce men to break off some habit, that threatens their sure and speedy perdition. But there is not a text in one of the pages of inspiration, that ex-

hibits this superficial reformation, as the condition of pardon and acceptance through a Savior. The young man that would know what good thing he must do to inherit eternal life, was civil and decent, and still was unfit for the kingdom of God, and was sent away very sorrowful. It will not be denied but that he had become a moral man, but he still loved supremely the good things of this life.

2. When men are directed, not merely to break off some of the grosser iniquities, but to *perform some of the mere external duties of piety*, the instruction given them is still inadequate. The very same motives that led to the one, will often lead to the other. The very same man, who would cease his profaneness, and his Sabbath-breaking, and his lewd song-singing, and his drunkenness, and his midnight revelings, because he had become ashamed of their vulgarity; will have prayer sometimes in his family, and will attend upon a preached gospel, and have a Bible in his house, and read it occasionally, because all this is civil and decent.

And sometimes this cheap and superficial religion is the high way to preferment. Men will be to some extent religious, if they can obtain character by it, and can make it a stairway to office, and influence, and wealth too. They will bow and cringe to men, and God too, if they may obtain suffrages by it. Men will consent to be anything, if it will make them great in the life that now is.

And they will perform duties, in hopes to gain heaven by this means. If God will excuse them for hating his law, and character, and government, they will attend upon his ordinances, and pay an outward respect to his Sabbaths, and repeat their creed, and rehearse their prayers; and account it a cheap salvation. And this it will be found is not an unusual resort of ungodly men. In every period of alarm, away they fly to Christian ordinances. So, in the darker times of Israel, they would steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and then come and stand before God in his house. And it is declared, in that case, that they trusted in lying words that could not profit.

God has never spoken of this external attention to religious things, as the terms of acceptance with him: for there may be still an evil heart of unbelief. The prayers uttered by the lips may neither have their source in the heart, nor throw back upon it the least impulse to piety. They may not even engross the thinking powers, but may be in the ears of Jehovah like the prating of the parrot. Men have no doubt uttered prayers, while the hostility of

their hearts, could they have been conscious of it, to the God invoked, and the Savior whose name was used, would have driven them from their knees, and sealed up their lips in the sullenness of perdition. And the Scriptures have been read, while the heart quarrelled with every doctrine and duty they enforced. And ordinances have been attended, and Sabbaths kept, and charities given, and confessions made, while there was the deadliest hostility to all that is holy in God, or purifying in truth.

3. If you add to all this a *profession of godliness*, the instruction given is still inadequate. In professing godliness, men often add perjury to their other deeds of wrong. A profession is not unfrequently the very climax of their impudence, and their daring. Ah, how mistaken have ministers and churches been, in supposing that when they had persuaded the ungodly to enter professedly into covenant with God, they had secured to some extent the object of the gospel institutions. They have not unfrequently lived to see their convert a more daring sinner than previously to his hypocritical adoption of the covenant; and have been grieved that they had not left him without the enclosures of the fold. They brought him up to sealing ordinances, sprinkled clean water upon him, and made his lips touch the consecrated symbols of a dying Christ, but the heart remained a mass of moral putrefaction; and the sacrifice offered was but a smoke and a stench in the nostrils of an insulted Savior. They painted and varnished the sepulchre, while within it was full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. It is many a time obvious, that so far from there having been any thing gained, by thrusting the worldling into this religious atmosphere, you have but the more effectually blocked up the last avenue to his conscience, and thus placed him, perhaps, beyond the reach of hope and of heaven.

But suppose, if you please, the very best case, and tell me, if in this visible transformation, the Lord Jesus Christ will see any thing that he will consider a compliance with the terms of life and salvation which he offers? And I have left out of view the question whether it *be right* to do so? Whether, without the bidding of Jesus Christ, we may thus administer his holy ordinances to unsanctified men? Are we, in such a procedure, honest to souls? is now the question. May we encourage them thus to compass themselves about with sparks of their own kindling, and walk in the light of their own fires? Are *they* safe, or *we* honest, while we watch no better the gates of the sheepfold? The press that men make toward sealing ordinances, is a proof that they are

uneasy and unhappy ; and if we grant their wish, do we answer honestly and fairly the question thus silently put to us, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Do we not rather seal them up to a perpetual stupidity, and shall we not have to answer for their blood, in the day that inquisition shall be made for it?

II. Having thus endeavored to show, what *is not* adequate instruction on this subject, I proceed to inquire, *what is?* In stating the terms on which the sinner can become interested in the Lord Jesus Christ, I should choose to say:

1. *He must explicitly avow his approbation of the law he has broken.* Here begins, under every government, where there has been revolt, the exercise of a right temper. Christ came not to destroy the law but to fulfil it. This declaration is found on the very title page of his gospel. Repent, said he, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And what is repentance, more or less, than a cordial approbation of the precept that has been violated?

Hence the language of penitence in all ages has been the same. "The law is good, its penalties just, and its whole design benevolent. God had not been kind, had he given us any other law, or been willing that it should be broken with impunity, or had affixed any lower penalty, or accepted any meaner sacrifice than his own Son, as the atoning Lamb. O, I am a wretch for having broken this law, and can offer no possible plea that shall excuse or palliate the smallest deviation from its precepts. If God should cast me off for ever, he would but treat me as I deserve to be treated, and expect to be." Thus the sinner takes to himself the punishment of his sins, and thus places himself in an attitude, where Christ can begin to notice him, and still be the friend and patron of the Divine law.

With this principle we are all familiar. The child sees you pouring your frowns upon his disobedience, and would be glad if you would agree with him in reprobating the precept he has violated. But your authority is lost, and your child ruined, if you cease to frown, till he confesses that he has broken *a good law*. Then, and not till then, can you relax the sternness of that countenance which frowns upon his disobedience. The teacher places the rebellious child at his feet, and he must be there till he confesses the precept just, that he violated. And the same principle is acted upon in all governments that admit of pardon.

So the Lord Jesus Christ, if he would not do a rebellious world incalculable mischief, must suffer the sinner to make no approach

to him, till he is grieved for his transgressions, or has avowed his full approbation of the law he has broken. Then he can be saved, and the law of God be sustained.

Now the whole of repentance may be summed up, as I suppose, in this retrospect of a humbled sinner, upon his guilty and inexcusable violations of a good law; including, however, his abandonment of the transgressions which he disapproves. Thus is performed one of the conditions, on which the Lord Jesus Christ will receive us to his favor, and wash away our sins in his blood.

2. *The sinner must become willing to owe his escape from the curse of the law to Jesus Christ.* One may know that he has broken the law of God, and that the law he has broken is a good law, and still be too proud to receive pardon on the terms of the gospel. We have known cases when men have starved and perished rather than receive alms. The pride of their hearts would not suffer them to eat the bread they had not purchased. And men have gone down to hell, because they would not cast themselves upon that Savior, whose help was seen to be necessary, in order to their escape from the wrath to come. Not merely must the sinner see that he is perishing, and that there is no help out of Christ, but he must become pleased with Christ, else he will not feel himself secure in his hands, nor apply to him for life.

It is believed that many a soul has perished, hesitating whether it would be prudent or safe to cast himself upon the Savior. To do this is faith, and implies that already the temper of the heart is changed: but all men have not faith. It is by no means certain that awakened sinners have faith. Some may have; for none can say how early in the process of alarm God may renew the heart. But of this we are sure, that when renewed, it is prepared to believe, soon after the character of Jesus Christ is presented.

Sinners often wonder, and sometimes quarrel, that on making the inquiry of the text, the answer we give them implies a new heart; whereas the inquiry they intended to make was, how they should *obtain* a new heart. They wish to know how they must operate, with their evil hearts of unbelief, so as to have them renewed. Now to this question we can give no answer. We know of no process by which an ungodly man may work himself into the kingdom of God, but by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. We can tell them to do nothing, that does not imply holiness; and if we should, they might do as we direct them, and *still be lost*; whereas they ask us, what they must *do to be saved*. If to this question they wish an honest answer that

will do them any good, we must assure them, that having been brought to approve of the law they have broken, they must also approve of the remedy provided, must commit their souls to Jesus Christ. These conditions can never be altered.

3. When faith has accepted the atonement, and sin is forgiven, *there must be a life of obedience*, as that which can alone express the soul's continued approbation of the law that has been violated, and the remedy that has been provided. Repentance for sin, and faith in Jesus Christ, are not exercises belonging merely to the first stages of piety, and to be then done with for ever. The man who is born of God continues to hate sin, and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ till he dies. He does not give the law one approving look, and the Savior one welcome to his heart, and then relapse into his former impenitence and unbelief. He renews his repentance day by day, and as often makes fresh application to the blood of sprinkling, for pardon and acceptance. His whole life, if he honor the religion he professes to embrace, is filled up with obedience to the law, with sorrow and tears for having broken it, and with the testimonials of a cordial approbation of the atonement made upon the cross.

We know nothing of that religion, which, after taking root in the heart, can lie dormant for years, and produce no transforming influence upon the man, conforming him to the truth, or moulding him into the image of Jesus Christ. God will not forgive sin, and take away the curse, and enter into an everlasting covenant with the transgressor; and then permit him to go into exile from his presence, and be again an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger from the covenants of promise; and live without hope and without God in the world.

He calls in his elect, only in time, however early, to fit them for his presence in glory. And the work of grace goes on from that time till death. They aim at a perfect obedience to the Divine law, and go from strength to strength, till every one of them appeareth in Zion before God. They forget the things that are behind, and reach forth to those things which are before, and press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Hence there cannot be any very long suspension of those exercises, which are essential at the beginning of a course of piety. The heart continues to be penitent, and believing, and obedient, till all sin is removed, and grace is perfected in glory. I close with

REMARKS.

1. *Let us compare all this with what is sometimes termed the gospel.* How wrong and how ruinous is the advice, that not unfrequently is given to the unregenerate.

We have known when pains was taken to prevent men from becoming alarmed, so as to put the question of the text with earnestness. They must not hear that the heart is desperately wicked, lest they should fear that in all their deeds they had broken the law of God. They must have no suspicion that their prayers are deficient, lest they should see their need of a Savior. They must be told nothing of hell, lest they should be afraid of its torments; nor hear of election, lest they learn that men will not accept of mercy, till they are made willing in the day of God's power.

And thus every doctrine, calculated to pour honor upon the Divine law, and reflect correspondent shame and reproach upon the transgressor, must be disproved, or concealed, or neutralized; and that perhaps by the very men who have been sent as the heralds of salvation to a lost world. We have seen them afraid, lest without design they should effect some alarm among the foes of God. Hence the monstrous abuse of that text, when any hard truth had leaked out; "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." Ten thousand consciences, that had been pierced with truth, have thus been healed slightly, by a text which God inspired for far other purposes. But when no soothing opiate would answer, and the sinner could not be prevented from alarm, we have known advice to be given that was the most ruinous possible.

We have known when awakened sinners have had suggested to them a train of thought calculated to chase away all alarm, by lessening their respect for the violated law. It is pleaded that they have misapprehended their guilt; that the law is not so severe as they imagine, and moreover, that the mercy of God will not allow him to punish sinners for ever. What parent, say these tender-hearted instructors, would cast his child into a quenchless fire? Will God punish eternally the errors of a few years? God will be moved by their tears, and will pardon them, if indeed their grief has not *already* done away their guilt. Thus their anguish of heart is all soothed, while yet there is no repentance.

We have known when the awakened were told, that they were in a fair way to obtain religion, that they must persevere, and hold out, and they would do well. But unhappily their way was the

way to death, and they did persevere, perhaps, and their alarms were soon gone, and they are seen in the broad way, or are gone to know the full weight of that curse of the law which once hung over them. Had they been told that there was nothing holy in their terrors, and that they were still insecure, till they applied by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, they might have obtained eternal life. They should have known, that they had *not overrated* their danger, nor half estimated their guilt; that God *was* angry, as they supposed, that there *was* a perdition, as deep, and dark, and hopeless as they feared. Then there might have been a prospect that they would flee for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them in the gospel.

The case is said to have happened when they have been directed to a novel, or a party, to chase away their glooms. A journey in the country, or a visit to their friends, the song and the dance, have been considered a better specific for their pains, than the atoning Lamb of God. Let it be, that these are extreme cases, still means like these have often been resorted to, in order to do away alarm, and soothe the waking conscience. But it will wake again in the day of death, and gnaw with a still keener appetite from the day of judgment onward.

Finally, any instruction given awakened sinners, that they may comply with and still perish, is cruel and treacherous. Say to them as Paul did, and you are safe, and they too, if they follow your advice. And they will be as likely to do their whole duty, as any part of it. Christ will bless only that instruction, which comes up to the standard he has given us. O, let not the lips, that should pour out only truth, that should help the sinner to a full acquaintance with his sins, and press his conscience, till he shall feel that he cannot do an hour without Christ, be employed to stop the progress of conviction, and through a mistaken tenderness, bind up the rankling wound, ere the probe has reached its centre, or it has disgorged its putrescence. When the sinner, under the management of the Holy Ghost, is in a fair way to become thoroughly convinced of his misery and his ruin, let not the work be arrested in its progress, and the ear be assailed with the sound of peace, till heaven is once made sure.

The prodigal is alarmed for his life, and grieved almost to distraction for his baseness of conduct, and has his face turned homeward, but a being meets him, pretending to be his father's friend, and sent to guide him in the way to his house, and bears him into

a hopeless and returnless exile! He casts a veil over the filth and rags of the vagabond, tells him of his native virtues, admonishes him to make one more effort to live without his father, and the wretch believes, and turns his face from home, and perishes in his profligacy. So many a sinner, just at the moment when he began to think on his ways, when his sins were staring him in the face, when there was seen distinctly the countenance of an offended God, and when there began to be some thought of repairing to a Savior, has been misdirected and destroyed.

Instead of saying, as St. Paul did, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," we set about making him happy in some other way. He must mend his life, and send up some prayer, and wait at the pool, and hold on his way:—Yes, all this would be well, were he now a believer. But the misery of the case is, he is yet unsanctified, his heart is set in him to do evil, and the controversy between him and God is yet at its height. He must stop and turn back, or lose heaven. He yet knows not enough about his sins to render a Savior welcome. He still dares to stand on the margin of perdition, and has a disgust for holiness and heaven so implacable, that he will risk all the danger he is in a little longer, rather than give his heart to Jesus Christ.

Tell him now of waiting God's time, and attending on the means; when God's time has gone by these thirty, forty, sixty years, and means have had no effect all that time! Ah, I am afraid you will amuse him till his day of mercy has gone by, and he perishes in his bondage. The manslayer is fleeing from the avenger of blood, the road before him parts, a post is erected, and a board on it, on which is written, in large capitals,

REFUGE ☞

while the finger of a man's hand points to his course. He can only read a single word, and must run while he reads. If he stops to breathe he perishes.

Now such is the office of the gospel ministry, when it comes in contact with a sinner anxious to flee from the wrath to come. It can lose no time in directing him to the Lamb that was slain. It must urge him to a place of safety, and when the danger is over, then tell him of means, and urge him to prayer, and press a reform, and build him up for heaven. I proceed to a

2. Remark. *We may gather from this subject a reason, why revivals of religion in some instances, add so little to the strength of the*

Churches. The lax instruction sometimes given to awakened sinners at such a time, even by well meaning men, who aim to be faithful, tends to nourish a growth of piety, that is sickly and effeminate, and will finally add but little to the vigor and beauty of Zion. I know that if souls are converted they will get to heaven, and blessed be God, if he will convert them, but their usefulness in this life, much depends on their early instruction.

Let the doctrines be kept hid from those who are coming into the kingdom, and let there be detailed only that soothing, indistinct, and sickly instruction, which has been noticed, and the converts, when made, will go halting along to heaven, and the Church and its ministry have very little comfort in them, or help from them.

They will scarcely know *what* converted them, whether truth or error. It was truth, I know, for God sanctifies through the truth; but there was so much error mingled with it as to render it, in their own view, doubtful which produced the effect. And having associated the kindness of their youth, the love of their espousals, with so much indistinctness of doctrine, they will be likely ever after, to court this same darkened exhibition of the gospel, and finally die, before they shall have learned what truth is. And while they live, they will be liable to be driven about with every wind of doctrine, and vex the Church, and embarrass the ministry, and pass perhaps from one denomination to another, and finally be saved though as by fire.

They will be doubtful *who* converted them. They were told when under alarm, to do many things toward their own conversion, and they did them, and they were finally converted; but whether they did it themselves, or whether God did it, they find it hard to tell. And they will give others the same darkened counsel that was given them. Thus God is robbed of the glory due to his name, and the Churches filled up with members, who will hang a dead weight upon every revival that shall happen in the Church, till they are taken up to heaven, and taught there what they should have learned that same week in which they were born of God.

And they may never find out in this world, what they were converted *for*. Men will be active in duty, only as they are rooted and grounded in the truth. In all men, truth, or what they think is truth, is the spring of action. Hence some whole Churches, in this day of Christian enterprise, can be brought to do nothing; and the reason is, because they know nothing *distinctly*. If you

could enlighten them, they would act, but they will not be enlightened. The secret is, they were born in a dark, misty, and debilitating atmosphere, and they choose to live and die in the same. Let some good man who knows and loves the truth, go into one corner of such a society, and there be active and faithful a few years, till the Christians know what they were born again for, and that corner of the Church shall be, from that time, worth all the rest, in any labors to which God shall call his people.

I know not but that we have here *one*, and that not a very inefficient cause, why so many ministers have been quarrelled away from their people, immediately after some great revival. The faithful and laborious servant of God had gathered into the Church a multitude of converts, and expected much from them, but had not prepared them to be useful; and when at length he urged them to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, they contended with him. If any should consider this a bold suggestion then I hope they will make a happier one, and take away this reproach from the Churches. I cannot believe, that a revival of religion, effected by the Spirit of God, under a distinguishing gospel, will tend to unsettle its ministry. But I can easily believe, that one who knows and loves the truth, may hold it back in a time of awakening, to the incalculable injury of those who are born again, and at the risk of his own sudden removal from his flock. He is afraid to give them strong meat, and feeds them with what he terms milk, but which proves to be poison, and they wither under it, and he is punished for administering it. Thus is fulfilled that inspired adage, "He that will save his life shall lose it; but he that will lose his life, for my sake, and the gospel, the same shall save it."

Finally, let me say to lost men, haste your escape to Jesus Christ. You stand in imminent danger of perdition every moment. Your ruin is nearer, and your guilt, far greater, than you ever conceived. That sinner that has been the most afraid, has never been half enough afraid, of the wrath of God. It burns to the lowest hell, and when you fall beneath it, your courage will all be gone in a moment. "Can thine heart endure, or can thine hand be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee?"

You see what the terms are, and God will never alter them, on which you can be accepted of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are the best, and the only terms that could be offered. They secure the honor of the Divine law, the glory of Christ, and the eternal

life of the sinner. They are humbling terms, and to reach the case they must be.

Now will you stand quarrelling with the truth till you perish? Is this the right course for a sinner? You thus harden your heart, and sear your conscience, and provoke your doom. "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." May God bless his own truth, and make it a fire and hammer to break in pieces the flinty rock. Amen.

SERMON LXI.

SALVATION MADE SURE.

JOHN VII. 37.

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me ; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

PERHAPS of all the excuses that men have offered, as designed to account for their impenitence, none has in it more infidelity or more impudence, than that which fastens their ruin upon the purposes of God. If he has any decree respecting their future state, no matter whether he has resolved they shall die or live, no matter whether his decree deprives them of agency or not—if there is any such decree they resolve to leave the whole matter with him, and to give the concerns of the soul no attention. Hence many who have believed the doctrine have still felt that it should be seldom or never exhibited before ungodly men lest it should keep them away from Christ.

Against a sentiment like this I feel it my duty for one to enter my strong and decided protest. And for the following reasons :

In the *first* place it is a doctrine as plainly revealed in the Bible as any other, and the Bible is a revelation of the mind of God to sinners, hence God must have known that the doctrine has not the tendency that men have attributed to it. He would not have revealed a doctrine, whose tendency would be to thwart the purposes of his mercy.

In the *second* place I believe it a doctrine calculated above most others to awaken sinners. It exhibits the depravity of the heart in its most glaring colors. God will compel some to come in because all are unwilling, and because that but for this interference of his mercy all must be lost.

In the *third* place it exalts the Lord. Let the gospel scheme be such as men would have it, and God would make no calculations respecting the magnitude of his kingdom. Christ would not be able to know whether he should see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied or not. But God has done himself honor in fixing eternally the boundaries of his kingdom.

Finally, it is to the minister of Christ and the people of God

generally their only source of hope that a preached gospel will have its desired effect. No one would be willing to go out and preach the gospel to men totally depraved unless the unalterable purpose and promise of God secured success.

The atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ is the only foundation of hope to a perishing sinner. Hence the Savior represented himself as the bread of God that cometh down from heaven and giveth life to the world. And he added, he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But said he to those about him, "Ye also have seen me and believed not."

But our Lord assures them that if *they* would not believe on him and follow him, still he should not be without disciples. There were some whose faith in him, and whose perseverance to eternal life were made sure. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me: and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Let us now give this text a candid and prayerful examination. We may sometimes suppose ourselves interested in evading the force of Scripture, but our true interest demands that we endeavor to understand it as God intended it should be understood. I cannot wish, nor can any other man who will feel and act rationally, that this text or any other should be made to speak a language which the Spirit of inspiration did not intend to teach. The text naturally divides itself, and opens to the mind three leading thoughts.

- I. Some of our race God the Father gives to God the Son
- II. All these shall infallibly come to him.
- III. None that come to him shall be rejected, or cast out.

I. Some of our race are given of the Father to the Son. It reads, you will remember, "All that the Father giveth me shall com to me: and he that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

If the New Testament had not made us familiar with this language, it would seem strange that one person in the Godhead should present to another that to which the other had an equal right with himself. But in the economy of redemption each person acts a part somewhat distinct. Christ as Mediator acts an inferior part, is delegated and rewarded by the Father. What then are we to understand by the Father giving some of our race to the Lord Jesus Christ? There is a passage very much like this in the 10th chapter of this same gospel. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto

them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." We read again in the 17th chapter, "That he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." Again, "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me, out of the world: thine they were and thou gavest them me." Again, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me." Again, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me."

I think these quotations, without proceeding farther, show clearly that the word *giveth*, in the text, has the same meaning as *given*, in the text which I have quoted. The meaning then is, that in some wondrous transaction between the Father and the Son, a part of our race was given to Christ, to be in some peculiar sense his property. Nor do I see how any honest man, who is willing to let the Scripture explain itself, can come to any other conclusion.

A writer of the Episcopal communion,* for whom I love to express my high respect, gives us this explanation: "All whom the Father *had given* to him, in his foreknowledge and choice of them, and by the covenant of redemption made with him as their surety, would come to him." Another for whom I feel a similar respect,† says: "All that the Father has graciously chosen to himself, and whom he *giveth* to me in consequence of a peculiar covenant, to be sanctified and saved by me, will certainly at length come unto me." Permit me to quote another no less respectable.‡ He says: "From the gratuitous election in Christ by the Father, flows the gift of faith, which eternal life necessarily follows. Therefore, faith in Christ is a certain testimony of our election, and consequently of our future glorification."

Thus are we, by the covenant testimony of Scripture, and by the advice of able and pious commentators, driven to the conclusion, that a part of our race are given to Christ previously to their conversion, and are his in a sense in which the residue are not his. And if one other text may add its testimony, we shall learn that they were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him, in love.

If any should persist in denying this doctrine, it will be recollected that the texts I have quoted, are but a few of the many that go to establish the same point. And I know not what explanation

* Scott.

† Doddridge.

‡ Beza.

they can give the text. Will they say that the Father, in converting them, gives them to Christ? Then, I ask, What is meant by their *coming to him* after all this? May a man be born again, and be received into the family of God, who has not come to Christ? Will it be said that they are given to Christ, not from the foundation of the world, but immediately before their conversion, then I ask, Why at that time rather than years sooner, or an eternity sooner? Beside, nothing is gained by this mode of exposition. All the objections that lie against an eternal choice, and more too, lie against the idea of their being chosen one hour before their conversion. The fact of their coming to Christ depending on their being given to him, is the idea so much hated and so much controverted.

And it cannot be said that all are given to Christ in the sense of the text, for this would convert the Scriptures into nonsense, and would really contradict the testimony of Christ: for all do not come to him, but all that are given to him shall come to him. I do not see but we must all acknowledge, whatever be our prejudices, that there is a sense in which some of our race, to the exclusion of others are, previously to their conversion, given to Christ. We are not authorized to say who they are, nor what the number. Till by their conversion and subsequent holiness of life, they have made their calling and election sure, there is no one can guess with regard to any individual, whether he is or is not one of the number given to Christ. The plan is fixed and unalterable, but secret, till developed in the conversion of souls.

II. All who are thus given to Christ shall come to him. The context decides that to come to him is the same as to believe on him. "He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." The fact, then, is certain, that all who are given to Christ will believe on him. And if none can believe on him of whom they have not heard, and if none can hear without a preacher, it is equally certain that all who are given to Christ will be furnished with a preached gospel, and will thus be brought to know and obey the truth. God has made his plan perfect; he has not determined the end, and left the means unappointed. He has chosen men to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

The idea is certainly interesting, that nothing will prevent the Lord Jesus Christ from having a Church. It was predicted of him, "He shall see his seed—and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper

in his hands." To secure the redemption of all those who were given to Christ, nothing more is necessary than that he know who they are, and have power to make them willing to be his disciples. And he assures us, "I know my sheep, and they follow me." "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."

It is wonderful to see through what obstacles the blessed Redeemer has pressed his way, in gathering in his chosen people. They have been scattered through all the periods of time, and probably more or less through all the nations of the earth. In the old world, at the time of the deluge, there was but one family that belonged to Christ, and but one in Sodom. By some impulse, felt, but indescribable, all the chosen of God are induced to come within the reach of truth, and thus are sanctified. One is born in the bosom of Africa, but is kidnaped and brought to a Christian land, and wanders to the doors of the sanctuary, hears the truth, believes, and is saved. Another, from the western forest, comes, he knows not why, to a land enlightened by the rays of gospel truth, and in some happy hour is sanctified through its influence. Another, as if God was resolved that his Church should be composed of some from every kingdom, and nation, and tongue, and people, is born on some distant isle of the Pacific, is bred a pagan, lives a liar and a thief, till some favored vessel transports him to this Christian land, where he hears the gospel, and is saved. Another and another, by a combination of circumstances that none but infinite wisdom could plan, and omnipotence execute, are rescued from the deserts of moral desolation, brought to the light, and made willing to follow the Lamb.

One is sanctified in his mother's arms, another arrested amidst the follies of youth, and another snatched from the verge of hell when he had quarreled with God a whole century. One is sanctified on a throne, and another carried to heaven from the veriest retreat of poverty and ignominy. The servant and his master, the princess and her handmaid, are made joint partakers of the same grace. One is awakened in the sanctuary, another in the ball chamber, and another at a funeral. The truth has been heard, and some event, occasionally the most unlikely, brings it to remembrance, and presses it upon the conscience. The unseen agent is the Holy Ghost, and the work is done, perhaps, before any human eye takes cognizance, or the very individual himself knows the meaning of the change he feels. When the good work is begun, it goes on until finished in heaven. Thus the Lord Jesus, traveling in the greatness of his strength, has been employed ever since

the time of the first promise, in bringing home to himself those that the Father giveth him. He has passed down through the vast tract of ages, and has searched the recesses of every kingdom, to discover and bring to holiness, happiness, and heaven, his elect. No ages of darkness, no dungeon of despotism, no labyrinth of error, has ever hidden from his eye one of his elect. His voice says to the north, "Give up; and to the south, keep not back; bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him, yea, I have made him." All the future periods of time, and the various districts of the earth, will continue to hold their respective portions of the elect at the disposal of the Redeemer, till the last pilgrim has traversed the desert, and all the mansions in glory are filled. Then will appear, to the joy of his people, but the shame and confusion of all beside, the truth of the text, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me."

III. "And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." In the original scriptures, the double negative used in this clause of the text, renders the assertion the strongest possible. The Lord Jesus, without an oath, could not have associated more strongly his resolve to save all those that come to him. The assertion embraces two things—he will not reject them when they first apply to him for mercy, nor will he afterward spurn them from his presence.

1. He will receive them. Beside the text there are abundant assurances to this point, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price;" and there can no fact be stated, that contradicts the truth of these assurances of heaven. There never has a sinner come, and been rejected. In no age, in no land, under no circumstances, did the Lord of glory ever spurn from him the sinner who had become humble, and was fallen at his feet, to implore forgiveness. "And him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."

2. Those whom he once receives, he never abandons. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." If there was not another promise, this one would effectually secure every sinner, who has entered into a covenant of peace with the Re-

deemer. But the Bible is full of promises to the same point. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

But there arises here a very interesting question. Does the last clause of this text extend beyond the first? Having made it sure that all those whom the Father has given to the Son, shall come to him, is there left any hope for those not thus given? There is no doubt but the latter clause, which has no reserve, may be understood in its most unlimited sense. When the Redeemer exclaims, "And him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out," it cannot be questioned but that if any should come who were *not* given to Christ in the covenant of redemption, still they shall be accepted. I consider the text as making it certain that the elect shall believe, and as opening the widest possible door of hope to the nonelect.

They would hardly desire more than that the Savior should be willing to receive them, if they come to him. They cannot wish him to receive them while they are unwilling to come, the thing implies an impossibility. The gate of heaven then is as wide as the most depraved could desire. It will admit them, as soon as they are willing to enter, and, till they are willing to enter, they cannot be considered as wishing to be admitted.

But if the question be asked, Will any ever be willing to come to Christ, but those who are given him of the Father? the answer is, They will not. But the fault is all their own. The fact that God will make some willing, determines nothing with regard to the residue. Mercy is as free, and its reception as practicable, to the non-elect, as if none were elected. If heaven and glory were barred against the rest, if they could not be received on the same terms, if greater obstacles impeded their conversion, or if the atonement was not sufficient for them, as well as others, then the case would be hard. But if God does for his people what he is under no obligation to do, if *he* produces the repentance and the faith which *they* ought to exercise without his agency, and removes the obstacles which their own iniquities interpose, and which they are under obligation to remove; then there can be nothing hard or unmerciful in his dealings with them, who voluntarily reject his mercy, and are lost.

To all then, elect or not, we are certainly authorized to say that their salvation is possible. If Christ had limited the last clause of the text, and other texts like it, then we must have limited the invitations of the gospel. If he had said that *of those whom the Father giveth me*, none of them on coming to me shall be

cast out, then we could not have opened our lips to the non-elect. As things are, they may come and claim the promise of the text. "No degree of previous guilt, no inveterate habits of vice, no slavery to Satan, no secret decree of God, no involuntary mistake, would induce him to reject a single person." The invitation implied in the last clause of the text, is one of the broadest possible. The old, the hardened, the obstinate, the most hopeless sinner, is as sure to be accepted as any other, if he do but come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

An able writer on this passage observes, "These two views of the Divine will, his *secret will* concerning those whom he has chosen to salvation, and his *revealed will* concerning the actual salvation of every believer, are perfectly coincident; for no one *will* come till Divine grace has subdued, and—in part—changed his heart, and therefore no one who comes will ever be cast out."

If a doubt should remain let the trial be made. If a neighbor of yours had prepared a feast, and had sent out a general invitation to all about him to come and partake, and yet by some means or other you had imbibed the doubt whether there would be any seat at his table for you, it would be easy to go and test the sincerity of his invitations. Appear at the feast with your neighbors, take your seat with them, and act as if you too was welcome, and then if the host expel you the truth of his hypocrisy will be established. Let the unbeliever go and do likewise. Let him repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and if rejected then the case is settled. Till then, in the face of so many, so broad, and unqualified invitations it is impious to doubt. If with the slothful servant you suspect that God is a hard master, do *your* duty and then know. Use the talents entrusted to you as he directs, and wait till the time of his coming. Then if you find no room for you in the kingdom of heaven, the Bible will prove a lie, and you will carry with you to perdition the consoling reflection that you are imprisoned and punished through breach of faith: and a cordial like this would cool the fires of the pit.

REFLECTIONS.

1. The subject may well impress us with respect for the character and ways of God. How sovereign, and how mysterious are the operations of his grace. One man he has given to Christ, while his brother, a man no more depraved, is passed by.

2. The subject should inspire the believer with gratitude. What mercy can be so great as to be given to Christ? And there

was in us no goodness to mark us out as the vessels of mercy. And shall not God now receive all our services? Shall we not devote to him all we have and all we are? Shall we not cast our influence, our wealth and all that we have into the scale with him? Shall we not come forward to labor and suffer, and if it be necessary to die in the service of him who died for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify us unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works? Can we otherwise than by a complete surrender testify an adequate gratitude and affection for our election and adoption?

3. The subject reads an awful alarm to all the impenitent. As yet they exhibit no promise of their election in Christ. And the same Egyptian cloud will hang over their future prospects till their character is changed. When they are seen at the foot of the cross, then will dawn upon them the first hope that their names were written in the book of life of the lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Till they have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ they have reason to fear, for they have no evidence of the contrary, that they are not of the number given to Christ in the covenant of redemption. If they are going into old age in unbelief, their apprehension on this subject ought to strengthen with every year and day and hour of their impiety. I have not the smallest fear that the condition of a stupid sinner would be made worse, by having strong apprehensions that he was not of the number who were eternally given to Christ. The contrary impression would doubtless be calculated to keep him stupid. Let him finally believe that he shall live, that heaven is made sure to him by the eternal purpose of God, and that without the possibility of failure he shall at last be made a subject of grace, and we cannot conceive of an impression more calculated to suppress all alarm. His cry will then be a little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep: so shall his poverty come as one that travaileth, and their want as an armed man. On the other hand, let them fear that they shall be lost, let them have strong apprehensions of the wrath to come, and those very alarms may bring them to think of their ways, and turn their feet to God's testimonies. Let them fear, that God has not chosen them to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, and these very fears may lead them to attend to the truth, and bring them within the reach of that Divine influence which was sent to convince the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment.

SERMON LXII.

THE DESIRES OF THE WICKED INADMISSIBLE.

PSALM CXL. 8.

Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked.

IN our unhappy world there are two grand interests. God has a kingdom, and intends to exert his power to make it prosper. Leagued with him are all holy beings. They are workers together with God. In this kingdom he governs with unlimited sway. All his dispensations are calculated to make his friends happy. Within this kingdom there is set up a distinct and opposite interest. It is managed by wicked men and devils. In their sad enterprise they spare no exertions. Many who belong to this kingdom seem not to know their own characters. They would fain believe themselves the children of God, and engaged in promoting the welfare of his kingdom. The subjects of each of these kingdoms may be considered as praying for their own prosperity. Of course their prayers must clash. If one kingdom flourish the other suffers. Hence the subjects of the one must pray that the prayers of their opponents may not be granted. In this surprising contest, one thing must not be forgotten—there are no intelligent beings that stand neuter. It is a universal doctrine, “He that is not for me is against me.” Those who are engaged with God in promoting the good of his kingdom, are denominated righteous; all others are called wicked. David, in the text, entreats the Lord to favor his own cause, and reject the prayer of those who have set themselves against him. “Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked.”

In pursuing the subject, I shall bring into view some of the desires of the wicked, and show as I pass on, that it must be the wish and the prayer of the pious that their desires should not be granted. And while we pursue the subject, may the eternal God grant us his gracious presence and smiles.

1. One desire of the wicked is, *That there is no God.* This we learn from the Scriptures, and may easily learn the same from observation. “Wherefore dost the wicked contemn God? he hath

said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it." "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." The genuine meaning of this text is, That the fool, which is the Old Testament term for sinner, wishes in his heart that there were no God. The pride of their hearts renders them unwilling that any being should be above them. "Who is the Lord that I should serve him?" They manifest their wish that there were no God, by leaving him out of mind, by refusing to obey him, by finding fault with his dealings, and by quarrelling with his plans. They dare not submit their conduct to Divine inspiration, and would be glad if there were no being to inspect. We learn from all this that they desire earnestly that there were no God.

But against this desire the godly oppose their prayers. It ever has been and must be their wish, that the wicked may not be gratified in their desires. And there are good reasons why they thus feel. If there were no God, every thing must immediately be thrown into a state of confusion. Chaos would return; universal disorder would prevail, and the issue would be that every thing would immediately verge toward destruction. War, and in its train, death, tears, and despair would fill every corner of creation.

Indeed, were there no God, no being would wish to live. Anarchy, complete, would desolate every world where there were found intelligences. The very men who had desired a creation without a God, would immediately recall their wish, and if possible, have again an omnipotent Creator on the throne of the world.

But why do we speak of a nation without a God? Let God cease to be, and nothing can exist. He constantly gives to all beings life, and breath, and all things. He is the great fountain of existence. He constantly animates anew his own creation. Well then may the godly pray, that the desires of the wicked who wish that there were no God, may not be granted. They consider their being a blessing. They are not willing to see creation ruined. They will constantly elect anew, as their supreme Lord and master, the Jehovah of the universe. They are pleased with his government, and are willing to leave him to manage their concerns. They wish that there may be a universal empire, and in all their prayers extol him who rideth upon the heavens by his name, Jehovah, and rejoice before him. Thus do Christians oppose the prayers of the wicked.

2. If a God do and must exist, sinners wish him to be a mere spectator of the affairs of the world. The grand objection they have to his existence is, that if he exist he must have the reins

of government. If he will allow men to do as they please, and call them to no account, they can then be willing that he should live. Like idle children they can be pleased with a father who will not concern himself in their affairs, but cannot love him if he restrain them. Our tongues are our own, and who shall be Lord over us? "Who is the Lord that we should obey his voice?" Wicked men have made it manifest that they desire God to be a mere spectator in his own world, by the exertions they have made to have this doctrine believed and received among men. If they have allowed that he governs the larger affairs of his kingdoms, they have still refused to acknowledge that a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, and that the very hairs of our head are all numbered. If he may dethrone a king, and aid in the councils of state, here his government must cease; he must not regard the prayer of the peasant, nor hear the cry of the dying slave. These things are too small for the notice of the infinite God. Thus have men taken pains to save God from the care of governing the world; and in all this have made it manifest that they earnestly desire God not to concern himself in the affairs of men. But their request cannot be granted. It is the earnest prayer of all the saints that God would not grant them the thing they wish. They not only desire God to reign, but they wish him to manage all the affairs of creation. They cannot be willing that a breeze blow without permission, or that an atom fly without direction.

They wish God to be thus minute in his government, because they consider their own safety and the safety of others to depend on this special care of God. If a mote may wander undirected, it may put a period to their lives before their sanctification be complete. If the meanest prayer of the humble may not be heard, all their hopes are destroyed. They dare not live in a world where one event is regulated by chance, or there is one creature without control. Instead of wishing to save God the care of managing the lesser affairs of creation, they delight to give him the honor of having a universal kingdom. They think it an honor to the eternal Jehovah, that while he furnishes the sun with light and heat, and martial the stars, he can, without burdening his infinite mind, direct the course of every floating atom. Thus the honor of God, as well as the safety of his creatures, invite him to universal empire, and form two grand motives why the children of God pray that the wicked may not have their desires granted. They delight to sing with David, "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice."

3. If God must exist, and must be an active agent in governing the world, the wicked are desirous that he should work without any plan. They are afraid of Divine decrees. They fear that these decrees do not favor them. They know that infinite purity must hate sin and sinners, and if it decree any thing respecting them, must decree their ruin. Knowing this, they are afraid that God should have any plan by which to work in future. In this case they can have some comfort. They intend to reform their lives, and they hope that God will then show them favor, unless some dreadful decree prevent. They have so mean an opinion of God as to suppose that his views may alter, and that in some old decree he may have resolved to do what he now would not wish to do.

Be the cause what it may, we learn, from every day's observation, that sinners hate to hear of God's decrees. They quarrel with this doctrine as soon as they begin to think, and the quarrel never ceases till they become Christians, or imbibe some false hope that the decrees will favor them. In their own little concerns they have their plans, and bend all their efforts to carry them into effect; but they are unwilling that God should exhibit the same wisdom.

In this matter the prayer of the godly must be that their desires may not be granted. The friends of God wish him to have his plan. They suppose infinite goodness can act with more energy if it set up an object and then pursue that object. If all the operations of Deity may be without design, they may also be without effort. No benevolent purpose may be accomplished; misery and sin may counterbalance happiness and goodness. The righteous found all their hopes of salvation, both as it regards themselves and others, on the purposes of God. Remove God's electing love, and you destroy all their hopes. This being the fact, they must pray that God would have his plan, and would pursue it in his eternal operations. They must, of course, pray that God would not grant the desires of the wicked.

4. Sinners desire happiness and heaven without holiness. Between these two God has established an indissoluble connection. He has decreed that holiness shall be the only path to happiness. But this connection sinners wish to destroy. They hate holiness wherever it appears, and yet they intend to be happy. That they hate holiness, is manifest by their opposition to the fruits of holiness. We are assured, and every day's experience teaches us, that they do not choose the fear of the Lord. They do not delight in his ordinances, nor love his word, nor offer to him any humble

prayers. They take no delight in the people of God, nor in the character of God. By all this they make it manifest that they are at war with holiness. "An unjust man is an abomination to the just; and he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked."

But the same cannot be said as it regards happiness. This object they pursue with all their powers. "Who will show me any good?" is their constant prayer. But the good they seek is worldly good. They intend to be happy without God. They think the creature sufficient to fill the mind.

Beyond the grave they hope and wish to live in the Christian's heaven. Yet they have no idea of any great change necessary in order to enjoy their bliss. They are often afraid that God has decreed that none but the holy shall enter heaven.

To these views of the sinner the pious are decidedly opposed. Their prayer is that God would not grant the desires of the wicked. There is nothing they love so much as holiness. Should the connection between this and happiness be broken, it would give them pain. To be holy is the grand object of all the saints. They have all their lives mourned the want of holiness. Nothing else so much assimilates the creature to God—and all the saints wish to be like God. It is therefore their ardent desire, that themselves and all they love may be holy. It is also their wish that none but the holy may reach heaven. It would pain them to have any there but such as are perfect in holiness. In every prayer, then, which they make, they oppose the desires of the wicked. When they pray for the spread of religion, when they pray for a holy heart, when they thirst after God, and when they look forward and hope for a holy heaven, they oppose the views of the sinner, and vent their ardent supplications that his prayers and his desires may not be granted.

5. Sinners desire that Christians may walk disorderly, and so dishonor the religion of Jesus. The Scriptures and daily experience establish this point. Sinners have ever been watching for the haltings of God's people. Nothing seems to give them more refined pleasure. Says the prophet Hosea, "They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity." No figure can be more striking than the one here used. The sin of God's people is the food of sinners: it is their meat and their drink. They must starve, if God's people were perfectly holy. "Mine enemies," says the Psalmist, "speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together." If sinners thus

lay wait for the saints, they must desire them to fall. And that this is the fact is proved by every day's experience. They seem delighted when they hear of the failings of those who profess religion. It is without difficulty that their minds are impressed unfavorably with respect to the pious. Small evidence has great weight in this cause. Hardly is any evidence required to substantiate the vilest charge against the friends of God and of truth. In all this sinners make known their desires; we are assured that they wish the downfall of the Christian.

But in this matter, their views are opposed by all the saints. These pray that they may not be gratified. Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked. To all who love God, nothing is more undesirable than that Christians should dishonor their profession. The holiness of the saints constitutes the beauty of Zion. This beauty must not be tarnished, yet tarnished it is, whenever the saints stray from the path of life. In every such case, the grand cause which engages the heart of God, and of the saints, suffers injury. Against these falls the saints pray, and are grieved when they take place. They love their fellow-saints. Every spot that appears in their garments grieves their hearts. They feel some of the same distress on such occasions, as is felt when they go astray themselves. Thus do we see a reason why the saints should pray in direct opposition to the desires of the wicked.

6. The wicked desire to remain ignorant of their own characters. This is an undisputed fact. We see them bar their minds against conviction. They dare not look into their hearts, lest they should become acquainted with themselves. They often oppose such preaching as brings the truth to light, and neglect to read those parts of the Scriptures which are most calculated to bring conviction to the conscience. They dare not look into their hearts; "They love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." They dare not come to the light lest their deeds should be reprov'd. Thus the ancient Israelites shut their eyes, and requested their prophets to prophesy smooth things, to prophesy deceit. We are not to suppose that those Israelites differed from other unbelievers. Their desires were such as are natural to every unsanctified heart. Ministers of the gospel are urged to the same thing as were the prophets. It is wished that they should so preach as to leave the conscience undisturbed. Sinners wish to retain their good opinion of themselves.

These desires of the wicked, the people of God pray, may not be granted. To them it is a very desirable object, that men be-

come acquainted with their own hearts. It is their daily prayer that they may enjoy the favor of being acquainted with themselves. And they wish the ambassadors of truth to deliver their message plainly. They wish that the wounds which sin has made may be probed to the bottom. On this depends the safety of the soul. A flattering ministry they consider the greatest curse with which God can afflict a people. Such a ministry seems to stop up the avenues of life. Men are usually first deluded, and then damned. God even speaks of sending them strong delusions, that they may believe a lie, and be damned. Men who wish to be deluded, and who shut their eyes against the light, are granted their request, and are so circumstanced that their delusions become riveted, and their destruction sure. In the view of benevolence, what can be more undesirable than such a state of things? How can Christians fail to pray that God would not grant these desires of the wicked?

7. Wicked men are very desirous that there may be no day of judgment. They do not wish the final inspection of Omniscience. They dare not have their conduct brought to a test. They know that if justice and truth fill the throne their cause cannot be plead. There can be no plea offered in their favor. Their conduct as it regards God has been base, as it regards their fellow-creatures, deceitful and often unjust. They have broken the law, in all its precepts, they have treated Christ with neglect, they have violated the rights of conscience, have resisted the influences of the Holy Spirit, and have rejected eternal life. For these crimes against God, and truth, and duty, they have no excuse to offer, and they dare not attempt to urge a plea. They anticipate the confusion of such an hour as shall bring all their deeds to light. They dare not be judged. And they sincerely desire that no day of judgment may approach.

In such desires the righteous cannot unite. It is their ardent wish that there may be a day that shall bring every deed to light, and pass an impartial judgment on all the actions of men. They do not expect to answer for their conduct, any more than sinners can for theirs. They expect, if dealt with according to their sins, eternal condemnation. They intend to plead guilty. But they hope that in that great day of dread decision and despair they shall find a friend in Christ. His blood will be their only plea. They will have nothing else to say but that they are sinners and that Christ died in their stead. But it is not simply the hope of safety that reconciles them to the approach of a day of judgment. They

wish such a day to come in order that the whole truth may come to light. They are willing that all their sins should be known, but they are also willing that every false accusation which has been laid against them should be removed. If their sins are all known they know that they shall appear great sinners, but this will reflect more honor upon Christ if he save them. But to have their character cleared from every false aspersion will be for the honor of our holy religion.

A full investigation of the character of the sinner is considered by them of vast importance. The honor of God will require this. They are to be doomed to eternal despair, and that God may appear just while he inflicts such an awful punishment it is important their sins should all appear in all their aggravations. Then will the world see and confess that God is just in all he does. Their sentence will be approved by their own consciences and by all other intelligent beings. The character of God will shine conspicuous. The character of the Savior will be elucidated, and heaven will be for ever the more happy for the investigations of the judgment day. These things make it very desirable in view of the saints that there should be such a day. Hence they constantly pray that the desires of the wicked in this matter may not be granted.

8. The wicked are very desirous to be left to act without restraint. Nothing do they desire more. Job represents the wicked as saying, "What is the Almighty that we should serve him? and what profit should we have if we pray unto him?" In the second Psalm the kings and great men of the earth are represented as saying of Jehovah, and his anointed, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." James represents the sinner as saying, "Our tongues are our own, and who shall be Lord over them." These scriptures join with many others, and with a thousand facts, to make it manifest that they are impatient of God's restraints. Indeed the great quarrel between God and sinners is this, that God will restrain them. If he would leave them to act their own pleasure, they would have no objections to his government, that is, each would be willing that he should govern others and restrain others, but are unwilling themselves to be under his control. He may reign in hell, he may restrain devils, but not me. Were sinners willing to be under God's restraints, they would manifest it by obeying his laws. His laws they constantly disregard, and by so doing, say, as plainly as it can be said, that they desire to be without restraint.

In this particular the children of God, and all holy beings, oppose their wishes. It would ruin the world to have them gratified. Free the wicked from restraint and there would be but little difference between earth and hell. None could enjoy themselves. The wicked could not be happy themselves, and they would not allow the righteous to be happy. We are certain that they could not be happy themselves; for allow the unholy passions to reign, and they uniformly render their possessor miserable. They discompose the mind and torture the soul. Let any one passion govern and the man is ruined. Let envy predominate and there can never be any joy in the soul. It poisons every stream of comfort. Let the other passions unite with this; let pride, and anger, and revenge, and lust—let these have the reins, and there is at once a very hell began in the bosom.

And these passions breaking out, for they must break out, will uniformly render others unhappy. Let a man be intoxicated, either with passion or with spirituous liquor, and the happiness of all around him is gone. One might as soon be happy in the front of battle. We have all had experience on this point. Can we then wonder that the saints should pray against the desires of the wicked? Must it not be the desire of all, who wish to be happy, that God would restrain the wicked? Ought not the text to be one universal prayer, Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked.

INFERENCES.

1. Our subject shows us the monstrous wickedness of the heart. Perhaps some have doubted as I have passed on, whether human nature is so depraved. That very doubt proves the truth in question. God represents the heart as deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. If, then, men are ignorant of their depravity, their ignorance proves the text to be true, and establishes the doctrine. Since it is the very nature of a sinful heart, to hide its own depravity, ignorance of what is in the heart proves it depraved.

Some of the things we have said seem too much to say of all sinners; but the Scriptures support, amply, every charge. Every heart in the fallen sons of men, possesses naturally the same character. As face answers to face in the mirror, so does the heart of man to man. He hath fashioned their hearts alike. If any difference is supposed, those who make the supposition must prove the fact. In order to know what is in the heart, we must place it where its feelings will be called into action. We have seen many

who seemed not far from the kingdom of heaven, who possessed, apparently, every amiable virtue, and seemed to be friendly to religion, who in an hour of clear conviction, manifested the temper of Satan. Then the character of the heart was brought into view. The Holy Spirit brought those objects before the mind which were opposite to the feelings of the heart. This brought the heart into action and displayed its character. Ordinarily men have such indefinite ideas of God, and of religion, that they know not whether they hate or love them. The experience of all who have been born again, and their confessions, join with Scripture, to make it certain that the heart, while unrenewed, is enmity against God and religion. It hates every thing that is holy. It hates every thing that opposes its selfish views. Such a heart, it is to be expected, *a priori*, will break out in such desires as I have in this discourse brought into view. It will wish there were no God, and that its passions had no restraints laid upon them—even if universal ruin ensue. If, then, any heart does not seem to be so depraved, it is because its nature has not been brought into view. It only waits an opportunity, and its nature will appear.

2. We may learn from our subject the nature of that change, which we term regeneration. It is not a mere outward reformation. It is a universal change in the desires of the heart, in the affections of the soul. The man may reform very much without being regenerated. The corrupt principles of the heart may for a time lie inoperative without being destroyed. Regeneration begins, and ensures their destruction. In order to hope that we are regenerated, we must feel that we have a set of new desires, not only distinct from, but opposite to those desires which we before entertained.

3. Our subject shows us the great difference between the righteous and the wicked. They have directly opposite desires. The wishes and the prayers of the one are directly opposed to the wishes and the prayers of the other. If one is gratified the other mourns. If one is exalted the other sinks. If one is happy the other weeps. Hence there is an absolute necessity, if they depend on God for happiness, that one or the other be for ever miserable.

4. Our subject shows us why sinners do not desire or relish the society of the righteous. They have opposing desires. They pursue distinct interests. Of course their language and their employment must be distinct and opposite. This being the case, how can they associate? While one remains the friend of God, and

the other his enemy, one pursues the interests of his kingdom, the other pulls down—while this remains the case they must dwell apart, or if together must be unhappy.

5. We learn from our subject that there must be hereafter two worlds, one for the righteous, the other for the wicked. No doubt there will be the same difference in their characters hereafter that there is in this world. They will continue to have opposite interests. They cannot then dwell together in peace in the same world. As the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness are entirely distinct here, so they must be hereafter. Christ will say to the righteous, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

6. We may infer from our subject, the necessity of ministers preaching doctrines which the impenitent will be unwilling to hear. We have seen that they are desirous not to become acquainted with their own hearts, but the design of preaching the gospel is, to make men acquainted with themselves, that they may be brought to repentance. Our labor, then, would all be lost if we left out of view those doctrines which sinners are more generally unwilling to hear. Instead of passing these doctrines by, these are the very doctrines which, above all others, we must preach. They object to these doctrines because they alarm their consciences. They cannot rest easy, they cannot feel satisfied with themselves while these doctrines are preached, hence they complain. Their complaints cannot be heard. The very doctrines they oppose must often be preached.

SERMON LXIII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S REVIEW.

ROMANS VI. 21.

What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed ? for the end of those things is death.

THE apostle inquires of the converts of his time, what fruit they had in those things of which they are now ashamed, things, the end of which is death. Hence three questions proper to be put now to those who were once in the gall of bitterness and under the bonds of iniquity: What fruit had you then in the works of sin ? why have you become ashamed of them ? and how is their end death ?

I. What part had you in the works of sin ? The question amounts to this. What *enjoyments* had you ? Did the service of the prince of darkness make you happy ? Or are the Scriptures true, and was the way of transgressors hard ? Let me say, and if I fail to prove my positions, let them be rejected, that the pleasures of a life of ungodliness, are neither *innocent*, nor *rational*, nor *satisfying*, nor *elevating*, nor *abiding*, nor *safe*.

1. They are not *innocent*. Men who refuse to be happy in the way that God appoints, cannot be innocently happy *in any* way. He directs that we be happy in serving him ; that we make it our meat and drink to do his will and pleasure. " Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." We are to walk in the ways of wisdom, and have the promise that we shall find them ways of pleasantness and paths of peace. Now if men do not love God, and will not take pleasure in obeying him, it must be that they are not innocently happy. Made as we are, we shall either love God supremely, and then shall be happy in serving him, or shall set up some idol in his place, and put our trust, and draw our enjoyment, from some forbidden source. It matters not as it regards the innocence of our enjoyments, whether they are derived from one created object or another, if we do not joy in God, we cannot be innocent. If we permit the noblest object he ever built, to take the place of himself in our esteem,

and every unregenerate man *does*, God must feel himself robbed and insulted.

2. The pleasures of ungodly men, not being innocent, are not *rational*. I know that many may think this a high and unwarranted charge against the whole family of the unsanctified, and still it is easily supported. It surely is *most reasonable* that men put themselves under the guidance of their Maker, and obey him in all things, and on him place supremely their affections. But none of these is true of the ungodly. They are not willingly under the Divine guidance, else they would have the best possible evidence that they are the children of God. His law they do not make their guide, nor his word the man of their counsel, else they would have the testimony of this text among others that they are his children, "Then are ye my disciples, if ye do whatsoever I command you." And the charge against them is, that they love the world and the things of the world, and that the love of the Father is not in them: and all this cannot be *reasonable*. Hence the pleasures of ungodly men are not *reasonable* pleasures, in other words they are not rationally happy. If we inquire in what their pleasures consist, we shall gain additional evidence that they are not rational. They consist in the gratification of their appetites and passions, not in those pursuits that elevate the mind and mend the heart.

3. The pleasures of unregenerate men are *not satisfying*. That which is neither innocent nor rational, we should not expect would be satisfying; we should promptly declare it *impossible*. God has made the brute creation, but not man, to be satisfied with the gratifications of appetite. This is their noblest power, the highest happiness they are capable of. Of them God has not required a higher aim, nor even this; he requires nothing. Of man he requires, that we give him our hearts, and man he has made capable of a higher enjoyment through the medium of the moral affections, than through the gratifications of appetite. And he requires us to be happy through this higher medium. He will not be satisfied that our noblest powers lie dormant; and while *he* is not so, neither shall we be. If we are capable of ten degrees of happiness, five will not satisfy us. Feed the appetites to the full, and we have only the five degrees, and are not satisfied. Men have made the trial. We have an instance exactly in point in Solomon. He built houses, and planted vineyards, and made gardens, and orchards, and pools of water, and got him men and maid servants, and cattle, and silver and gold, and musicians, and every thing that his

heart could desire. And when done, he declares them all vanity and vexation of spirit; they did not satisfy him. And if such is the experience of one who had the means of gratifying his senses to the full, and spared no pains to do so, what must be the sure experience of all other men, when they shall have made their highest efforts. They know their own comforts to be poor and unsatisfying, but are so unhappy as to doubt whether religion would furnish them any *better* comforts. Hence they press on, and still hope that some object may lie ahead, not yet overtaken, that will yield them the very blessedness they covet.

4. The pleasures of ungodly men are not calculated to elevate, but to *depress* their nature. They take pleasure in objects beneath the dignity of their being. If they would uniformly pursue *science*, and aim to elevate their minds, and take some mighty grasp of the works of God, then would less be said; though still, till they should give him their hearts, they would find themselves meanly employed. But, unhappily, they do not care, ordinarily, to attend at all to the elevation of their being. The things they might easily know, they do not care to know; the books they might read, and that lie in their way, they will not read; the very hours they have to spare, and that hang heavy on their hands, they would rather occupy in trifles than in the acquisition of solid science. The Sabbaths, for instance, that are not spent in the sanctuary, how seldom are they employed in the acquisition of science, though to thus employ them would be wrong. And the evenings, and other hours of relaxation, how belittling is more generally the employment with which they are filled up—the most useless conversation, or the merest indolence. O, how much these hours might do for the *mind*—suppose it of no importance that the *heart* be made better. How might all our young men acquire a knowledge of history, and enter more or less profoundly into science, and rise to the ability of reasoning ably, and speaking eloquently, and wielding an honest and masterly influence in any great matter of interest that should come before them. What a pity it would seem to be, that the noble mind, made in the image of God, and, for ought we know, capable of soaring in company of angels, in flights of sublime conception, should be held down by a depraved taste, and by sordid appetites, to daily converse with the merest trifles of time and sense. I remember the disgust it gave me, when I read of one of the emperors of antiquity, that most of his time was spent in catching flies. Though a mere child, when I met with this historical fact, I involuntarily inquired, why his *crown*, and *throne*, and

sceptre? A beggar boy might succeed as well as he, in his sordid occupation. But why did he appear meanly occupied, but as I compared his employment with some nobler business that might have occupied him? Go, then, with me to some place of idle course, and I will show you many a mind occupied as meanly, compared with its powers, and perhaps with its ultimate destiny, as in the case named. It is more than possible that the youth who is wasting his evenings in noisy laughter and trifling, if not lewd and profane conversation, might soon render himself capable of the noblest excursions of science, and follow Newton in his track among the stars.

Ah! who does not see, that if men had *minds* only, no *conscience*, no *powers of affection*, nor *hopes of immortality*, the belittling occupations of sin disgrace their intellectual character, and fix reproach upon them. But when we consider man in his nobler parts, capable of loving and honoring his Maker, capable of being employed as angels are, in executing the noblest designs of infinite love, how can we fail to see, in the ordinary enterprises of depraved men, danger that they will let down their nature; danger that they will find, when life is done, that they have *degraded their being*, as well as lost their souls. Suppose that Newton, after he made his noble excursions in science, could have remembered that he was once a menial, occupied with the merest drudgeries of life—would it not have seemed to him a pity that he had not begun his excursions earlier, and not employed his noble mind in what must have tended to cramp and contract its powers. And should those hereafter become Christians, who now are quite content with the little playthings of time and sense, how would they mourn at the retrospect. And be it otherwise, it alters not the fact, that ungodly men are employed in a manner beneath the dignity of their nature.

5. I remark again, that the pleasures of the wicked are *not abiding*. What joy they have, and it is far beneath what they might have, is fleeting and transitory. There is no steady light of day shining upon their path; they walk by the glimmerings of a taper, or at the best, by the lightning's glare, or the twinkling of some distant star. If somewhat happy, they often know not why, or if they know why, dare not dwell on the cause of their joy, knowing it to be such that a single hour may make them wretched. Would they tell the reason why they are happy, it would be seen to be merely a reason why they should be afflicted and mourn, and convert their laughter into mourning, and their joy into heaviness. Every object on which their joy depends is perishing.—is a dying

and a transitory object. They were not created to be the permanent food of an immortal mind. They answer as the mere playthings of men that have no richer treasures, no "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, eternal in the heavens." In the dying hour, at the farthest, and often long before, the treasures of the ungodly take to themselves wings, and fly away as an eagle toward heaven. Just when they calculated that their joy would be perfect, it proves a dream. What they grasped at was a mere shadow, and shrunk away from their grasp. Their hope perished, when God took away the soul. To expect permanent bliss, and base the hope of it on that which worms can devour, and thieves break through and steal, is to expect grapes of thorns and figs of thistles; is to sow to the wind and reap the whirlwind; is to pierce ourselves through with many sorrows.

6. The ungodly are conversant only with *dangerous* pleasures. Their pleasures are constantly the means of their undoing, being guilty and forbidden. That a nature capable of loving his Maker, should fix his supreme attachment elsewhere, is offering God a perpetual insult, and exposing the offender to the indignation and wrath of the holy and jealous Jehovah. The stronger our affections, and of course the higher our pleasure, the more imminent our danger. The best chance of safety consists in not allowing ourselves to be very happy, if our joy is not in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. I know that common opinion, and dangerous as it is common, that men should feel it their duty to be happy, but I see no warrant for it in the Scriptures. If to be very happy we must love idolatrously what God has forbidden us to love, then is nothing plainer than that our guilt must increase with our happiness, and God be the more offended. In such objects, then, if we be asked whether it is our duty to try to be happy, the answer is in the negative. God would see his creatures happy, if they will joy in him, but has said in his word that delight is not seemly for a fool, and has bid the ungodly to be afflicted and mourn. Hence all those amusements where ungodly men find their highest delight, are but cunningly devised means of *doing without God*, and are dangerous, in proportion as they are fascinating. Nor is it kind to wish them the undisturbed enjoyment of these high and absorbing idolatries. Were I in India, I would oppose the worship of the pagoda, because there is worshiped in these little sanctuaries, the images which God has forbidden both the making of, and bowing down to; but I would oppose more yet the feasts of Jugernaut, because an artful priesthood has thrown more

fascinations about the sacred car of that idol. At the worship of the latter, an Indian would be the most exhilarated, or if you please, the most happy, but for this very reason the most guilty. Then he would devote his whole heart to the false god, and then offend his Maker most. It is thus, precisely, with unregenerate men. There are some of their pleasures which, perhaps, they could be persuaded to abandon, but others they would risk their lives to defend. But the whole are unsafe pleasures, and those the most loved the most dangerous. Let the man sit down thus deliberately, and make out the full catalogue of those objects that hold his heart away from God, placing at the top of that list his highest, dearest idol, where his heart clings with the grasp of death, and he may rest assured that the most beloved object is the most dangerous, and that the residue are dangerous in proportion to the strength of affection. Till we have given God the supreme place in our hearts it is dangerous to love any object, as one the most trifling may become, before we are aware, our supreme idol. How has the game at cards weaned away a man from his family, and become dearer to him than his beloved wife and his flock of children? And the guilty carouse, and the forbidden cup, how have they a thousand times torn asunder every ligature that held the husband and the father to his home, and his fireside? What pleasure, then, is not a dangerous one, if our supreme delight is not in God?

Thus the Christian can look back to the time when his heart went after forbidden pleasures, but when he had no fruit in those things of which he is now ashamed, and the end of which is death. They were neither *innocent*, nor *rational*, nor *satisfying*, nor *elevated*, nor *abiding*, nor *safe*.

How wonderful, that he should have made his escape from such a labyrinth of danger! It will be to the good man a source of wonder for ever, that sin did not prove his ruin. And the grace of God, which snatched him as a brand from the burning, will be in the future world the subject of his elevated and eternal praise.

Having noticed how entirely without any fruit or enjoyment was the good man in his unconverted state, in those things which he once tried to enjoy, we shall

II. View him under the operation of that shame and regret to which his past conduct has subjected him. Unregenerate men have no idea that they are now putting forth those affections and betraying that character that they shall hereafter be ashamed of.

They have usually very high-minded notions of their own demeanor as honest, and upright, and dignified, and above all censure. But this pride is the result of their ignorance of their own hearts, of the law of God, and of that spirit and temper which the gospel requires. The man has only to know himself, to become ashamed. And this would never be but for the agency of the Holy Ghost. He would continue till he dies in all the pride of unbelief, if not enlightened from above. But we have our eye on the man whom it was the Divine purpose to bring to a timely repentance, and to do this would first render him ashamed of the very things which he once sought as his supreme delight.

He is brought to see that God is worthy of his whole heart, and that he has withheld it, and has worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is over all, God blessed for ever. He becomes conscious of a quarrel with his Maker, but for no reason that he dare now assign. Every attribute of his nature is glorious, and every act of his government holy, and just, and good.

And still the sinner has placed his supreme love on some idol, and refused to love and worship his Maker and his Redeemer. Years and years he persevered in this course of downright revolt, breaking every law of his rightful Sovereign, and suffering his heart to be governed in all its affections by some worthless object, that did not deserve his love. And all this time, as he now sees, God was his kind and gracious benefactor. This thought fills him with the deepest shame. As if one should discover, late in life, that some good man, that he had always hated, and ten thousand times abused, privately and publicly, had been his kind and constant benefactor; had fed his family, and provided covertly for all his wants; how covered with shame, in that case, would he be, on discovering that he had his best friend in one that he had ever treated contemptuously, and hated and abused most cordially.

Thus the good man, when he waked to a sense of his condition, was filled with confusion. "Then shalt thou be ashamed," says the prophet, in the name of the Lord, "and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done." And the Psalmist says, "Thou makest me to bear the iniquities of my youth." His shame is greatly enhanced by the consideration that he must now be indebted, as he always has been, for all his benefits to one whom he has always expelled from his affections.

He sees, too, that the ground of his preference for idols was a depraved and base heart, that would prefer any thing to God,

would love a stock or a stone more than the infinitely adorable and kind Creator; and in the mean time, would not be convinced that the course he took ruined him, that his misplaced affections polluted and belittled his mind, and that he was ensnared, and impoverished, and destroyed by the works of his own hands. Now it is that the man becomes filled with shame and confusion of face. I proceed,

III. To show that the end of these things would naturally have been, to the now regenerate man, and *must* be to all men who do not repent, death: the end of these things is death. This will be seen, when we consider, *That a course of sin leads to bad society, absorbs precious time, engenders an erroneous creed, benumbs the right affections, nourishes the wicked passions, and provokes the Spirit of God.*

1. A course of sin *leads to bad society.* If men will be transgressors, they must of necessity associate with men of similar pursuit. The gregarious nature of man prompts him to seek society, and renders him unhappy when alone, or when insulated from his fellows. Hence men that do not love the Lord, must mingle with that portion of the human family that have on the same general character. And those who have gone the greatest lengths in vice, have thus opportunity to approach and pollute all the residue. Suppose, then, that some unrenewed man should determine not to be polluted by those who are worse in temper and habits than himself, how shall he prevent it? Suppose him not profane, how shall he be a social man if he will not associate with the godly, and not come in contact and be injured by those who lift their mouth against the heavens? Suppose him not accustomed to speak lightly of Divine institutions, or of good men, or those measures that promote the prosperity of the Church; still how shall he be social with the ungodly, and not come into constant fellowship with men of this character? Make the attempt to collect a company of sober, serious, thoughtful, *ungodly* men, and if you do not soon discover that no such society can be formed, then have we very much mistaken the true state of the world. Where will you assemble them? Not at the sanctuary—not at the place of conference and prayer—not by the fireside of the man of God:—there the godly meet. You must keep your serious unregenerate man at home, or you must carry him to the place where sinners love to meet, and then you bring him in contact with profanity, and lewdness, and evil speaking; and, first or last

with all that is coarse and vulgar in vice. He must walk in the counsel of the ungodly, and he must stand in the way of sinners, and must at length sit down in the seat of the scornful. Thus, the fact of his being unregenerate, if he mingle with men at all, brings him naturally into bad society, and into contact gross and dangerous with all that is polluting in moral character. There are but two societies, the godly and the ungodly. I know some pains may be taken to exclude from some of these circles somewhat of the low and vulgar in character; but I know, too, that such efforts are but to a very small extent successful. There may be excluded the sot, who has been seen by every one in his most disgusting fits of inebriation; but I never knew the exclusion to extend to the more decent inebriate, who will have his wine after dinner, and drink himself senseless at the midnight card table. There may be excluded, perhaps, some more vulgar of the profane, but never the men who can sneer decently, and shape their oaths a little to the time, and place, and company. There may be excluded some species of the lewd and the profligate, but never wholly the men that practice that iniquity according to the maxims of high and polished life. Thus is it vain to hope that the society of the ungodly can be purged, so that it shall not be the high road to all the grosser vices, and to death itself.

2. A course of sin *absorbs precious time*. Unregenerate men throw away very many years of their probation. All that time that the Christian must spend in his closet, in the study of the Bible, and in the duties of domestic worship, the ungodly have to spare. Hence time often hangs heavily on their hands, and hence the *pastimes*, properly so called, are means invented to murder all those precious hours that are not filled up in the acquisition of wealth. Now, if men must associate with those who have time to spare, they must, of course, form the habit of wasting time. This shortens life, and begets the habit of not thinking—the habit of placing the mind in an attitude of listlessness and inattention, than which no habit can be more ruinous to one whose happiness in this life and in the life to come depends so much on prompt and vigorous action. If we are to reach heaven, and would be prepared for it, we must form soon the very opposite habit, and must learn to husband well every hour that lies between us and the grave.

If there were no oaths heard, and no evil bias of the affections generated, still no price should tempt the man who hopes to come to heaven, to waste his mornings and his evenings, and his leisure days, in the places of lounging indolence. The mere habit of let-

ting time pass unoccupied, has a fatal influence upon the welfare of the soul. We have known it to draw back from the path of life many a man, who, but for having formed this one habit, bid fair to reach the kingdom of God. His apostacy from a fair profession, and the hopes of glory, began in his return to the habit of chatting and laughing away leisure hours. The Christian has no leisure hours. There are no little nooks of time that he cannot fill up to the best advantage; and he may as soon return to any other vicious course, as to the habit of wasting his precious hours. Should we find he had returned to his oaths, or to his Sabbath-breaking, or to his cups, though it might shock us more, it would not be more ominous of his future entire apostacy, than a return to his idle amusements.

3. A course of sin is death, as it leads to the *adoption of bad sentiments*, and engenders an erroneous creed. There is a whole system of infidelity taught and believed in the promiscuous associations of the ungodly. It may not be styled infidelity, and lectures may not be given in the formal didactic mode, but the result may be the same. Let the child hear it said to-day at the tavern door, that there is no harm in the milder forms of profanity, and he imbibes the idea that there is no obligation in that terrible law, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain;" and this is infidelity. Let him hear it said in the same place or some other, that these Christians are a set of the most profound hypocrites, and he learns to doubt whether God requires his people to be a chosen generation, a peculiar people, and this is infidelity. Let him hear it said the next day, that Jesus Christ was the mere child of Joseph, and not as he pretended, God manifest in the flesh; and this again is infidelity. Let him hear again that probably the Bible has been wrongfully translated, and much corrupted by designing men, so that we cannot know how much of it is the testimony of God; and this is a still more open and barefaced infidelity. Thus our children, if they may spend their evenings and their play-days about the place of idle concourse, are taught intelligibly and fatally to reject the whole counsel of God. Thus many of our young men, while perhaps they have attended morning and evening upon a father's prayers, have been put into the school of infidelity, and the parent has discovered just when he hoped they would become a comfort to him, that their sentiments had been ruined, and the broad foundation laid for their final perdition.

I have proceeded on the principle that sentiment is the foundation of character, and character the ground of salvation. Hence

the end of these things is death. No man can without danger imbibe one wrong sentiment. It will assuredly bias, wrong his heart, and be acted out in conduct that will offend the Lord. Thus the end of these things is death.

4. A course of sin *benumbs the right affections*. It tends to destroy filial confidence, and fraternal, and parental, and conjugal affection. Devotion to some idol easily becomes stronger than any of the natural relationships, and thus neutralizes many a restraint, that the God of nature, as the infidel would name Jehovah, has imposed. But when we pass these and speak of the religious affections, it hardly need be said that all these are suppressed and quenched by a course of sin. How many children that have been taught the fear of God, a respect for his word, a reverence for his Sabbath, regard for his people and his house, and his ordinance, have had them all eradicated as they rose in life, and mingled with men versed in the art of undermining virtue. I have seen the lad of promise at the family altar, ready to believe a father's testimony, and listen to a mother's instruction, and giving high hope that as he rose in life he would fill respectably his father's place; and I have seen the same lad proud and stout-hearted, and far from righteousness; the advocate of infidel sentiment and vicious habits, and profligate manners, pressing his way down to that death spoken of in the text as the end of these things. And I have seen his parent's heart more grieved at some act of his conduct than he would have been to be called to follow his corpse to the grave. O it is awfully foreboding to see disappearing all the good impressions of an early religious education; and substituted in their place the revelling, and the doubt, and the indifference to holy things that so often marks the downward course to death.

5. A course of sin ends in death as it *nourishes the unhallowed passions*. We totally and fatally mistake man when we forget that he is born depraved. We are not to suppose, and shall be fatally disappointed if we do, that our children are in point of character that clean white paper on which any impression we please can be made with equal ease and certainty. No they have a bad moral character before we can well reach them. Hence our early business is to eradicate the wrong, as well as implant the right. If this is not early done, and we cannot do it without God, these evil passions are already to be nurtured and matured. Hence a life of unregeneracy is the whole of it a nursery in which these vile plants are watered and reared, and bring forth their evil fruits, the ripening of which is death. Men grow worse day by day while

they remain in the gall of bitterness and under the bonds of iniquity. Their position is never stationary, but their course downward, downward, downward toward the blackness of darkness for ever.

Finally a course of sin tends to death as it offers constant *provocation of the Spirit of God*. On the operations of his Spirit we are dependent for life and salvation. There is no amount of means, or force of human eloquence, or impetus of natural resolution that can arrest the course of sin. Men will not try to stop themselves, nor allow themselves to be stayed in their course by any human power. Hence our only hope is that God will make them willing in the day of his power. But every act of sin is resistance made to the efforts of his mercy and the influences of his Spirit. God strives with men. He did so in the old world, and does so still. And as then, so now, there will come a time when he will strive no longer. And when he shall so determine with regard to any soul, that soul is lost. The decree of heaven is, "He is joined to idols, let him alone."

Thus we see the danger that all God's people have been in, and that which still awaits all the ungodly. Their course is down to death. The end of these things is death. I close with a single

REMARK.

Have any of us reason to hope that we have been arrested in our mad career? then what *gratitude* and what *holy obedience* do we owe our gracious deliverer, and how kind and faithful should we be to those who are still in all the danger that we once were. And as was the case with us they are ignorant of their danger, and are not willing to be alarmed, and esteem it unkind that we concern ourselves with them. But all this alters not our duty. If we saw one asleep in a burning building, and he knew not his danger, and did not wish to know, and would esteem it unkind should we try to wake him, still we should not stop, but snatch him if possible from his perilous condition. And all to save his life only. Should we not then take greater pains still to save the soul, and do it at more hazard, and more expense, and inward assurance that our kindness would be repaid with wrath.

SERMON LXIV.

THE INFALLIBLE COMPARISON.

PROVERBS XII, 26.

The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor.

WHILE the term righteous is so frequently used in the Bible, to designate the good man, we infer, without the danger of mistake, that the good man will be honest. A false or fraudulent believer, is a character not recognized in the volume of inspiration. That religion which saves the soul, is sure to render us good and useful citizens of the present world, and any expectation of eternal life, when this first effect of piety is not produced, is vain. The text implies a fact which we have all observed, that the righteous are scarce. When you find a good man, it is almost certain that his neighbor is wicked. This would not be the case, were the pious as numerous as the men of opposite character. While a comparison is drawn between the righteous and the wicked, the favorable conclusion is not built upon any thing that relates to birth, or blood, or wealth. In the esteem of God, there is no value in these external things. Man looketh on these outward appearances, but God looketh on the heart. That superior excellence which he esteems, has its origin in the temper of the heart. Hence the comparison should neither render the one proud, nor mortify the other. It should make the believer humble and thankful, and produce awakening and conviction in the mind of the sinner. If God has made us willing in the day of his power, it becomes us to remember for ever the rock from whence we were hewn, and the hole of the pit from whence we were digged. If we are associated with the righteous, the praise of changing our state, and altering our condition, belongs to Him who produced the change. By nature men are all the degenerate plants of a strange vine, born the enemies of God, and the heirs of perdition, and left to act out our own temper, we should all carry with us to the grave the same odious character, and die the heirs of the same fearful destiny as others. Hoping then, neither to awaken pride or envy, but gratitude and conviction, I proceed to compare the pious man, with the man un sanctified. "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbor:"

I. *As he is possessed of a better temper, adopts better maxims, and acts from better motives.* By the temper of the heart, we mean that disposition, taste, or views, which generates all its moral actions, and gives them their character. We are born with evil tempers, and retain till the moment of the new birth, a taste, a relish, a bias, a propensity, to what is morally wrong, to what God hates and forbids. While this temper remains, disobedience is more pleasant than duty. A selfish, contracted, unpitiful, unforgetting, and unrelenting disposition is drawn out in every moral action. The temper that lives within, reigns without, colors every deed, writes approved or disapproved upon every exertion that partakes of a moral character.

The work of grace begins with a change in this native bias of the soul. It becomes essentially altered so as to be pleased with that which displeased before, and disgusted with that which before gave pleasure. Hence the heart of the good man is inclined to order, mercy, justice, truth, honesty, holiness, and happiness. The feelings now generated are in unison with God, and with all holy beings.

Hence originate a set of principles or maxims, diametrically opposite to those which govern the unrenewed man. Good men will naturally pursue a course that will gratify the temper of the heart. Hence the maxims or principles by which the life shall be governed, will correspond to the temper which the grace of God has generated. It was the maxim of the unregenerate man, that the promotion of his own interest, was a good to be pursued, although it might greatly injure the Church or the world; now, a smaller private good must yield to a greater public interest. Revenge was sweeter than forgiveness; now, forgiveness is an exercise that gives pleasure, while revenge gives pain. Retaliation appeared righteous and desirable, but is now a principle to the last degree odious and abominable. A deed of wrong, not discovered, was viewed as comparatively innocent, but a holy temper sees in sin, however secretly done, all the hatefulness that could attach to it when made public. It was felt that the things unseen are worthless, and that the present world has charms that belong to no other; but when sanctified, faith discovers better treasures in the heavens than earth can afford. And thus every maxim that governed the life was inverted, when the heart was sanctified.

And this change in the temper, and in the principles of action, have led to an entire new set of motives. The good man loves God and his kingdom, and loves his fellow-men, and now often

acts against his own interest, when he can promote the glory of God, and the good of others. The things that used to move him in opposition to his own conscience, have now lost their influence. He considers it more important to act so as to approve of himself, than to promote his own interest. To be poor, and low, and of little credit, is of smaller moment than to be miserable when he retires to think.

Hence we can place in the man of piety more confidence, can feel a greater security that he will not, if occasion require, injure and betray us, than in his neighbor. If we need his aid, and have nothing to pay, if we are in his power, and have no escape, if our property or life is in his hand, there is smaller danger than when there is none but an unsanctified temper and selfish motives. Hence "the righteous is more excellent than his neighbor."

II. *He sets a better example, and exerts a better influence.* Every man's life will correspond to the temper of his heart, and the maxims and motives that govern him. Hence, by their fruits ye shall know them. Men do not gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles. It never happened that there was one principle in the heart, and another acted out in the life. When the whole conduct is minutely examined, every man is what he appears to be. The good man not only sets an example of industry, sobriety, honesty, and generosity, which perhaps he did before his heart was sanctified, but is conscientious, humble, watchful, prayerful, benevolent, and heavenly-minded. Whatever property of nature was excellent in him before his conversion, is now still more conspicuous, while many things in him are entirely new.

Grace improves the properties which it does not regenerate. If naturally honest, he will now be more scrupulous; if hospitable, or liberal, or modest, or industrious, he will now exhibit advancement in all these valuable endowments. His example in many points will be new and valuable, and worthy of imitation. Hence said the Savior, "Ye are the light of the world; a city set on a hill cannot be hid." And again, "Ye are the salt of the earth." To the full extent of his circle, his conduct has a salutary influence on all around him, restrains vice, enlightens the ignorant, and gives countenance to virtue.

Hence the influence he exerts is salutary, and deservedly enrolls him among the world's benefactors, among the friends of God and of men. The poisoning influence of sin, whose tendency is to pollute and destroy, finds an antidote in the example of God's peo-

ple, else this world would verge rapidly to ruin. Show me a district where there is no piety, and I will show you the effects of vice, in the prostration of every thing that is excellent.

And the good man exerts an influence, when he neither speaks nor acts. If his conversation is such as becomes godliness, the world takes knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus. And men of very loose morals, and whose consciences are fearfully diseased, will act differently, in any given circumstances, from what otherwise they would, because they know how the good man in similar circumstances, would act. Thus the man of godliness, the profession of whose lips, and the tenor of whose life are coincident, will exert a salutary influence even when he rests upon his bed. He may be as retired as he pleases, but a pattern will be taken of his life, and it will be handed round as a model after which men may form their characters, and shape the tenor of their life. But his ungodly neighbor exerts no such influence. At the best, he can boast of nothing more than a scanty morality, whose highest motive is self-love, and his most splendid actions honesty, sobriety, hospitality, and generosity.

III. *He is more excellent, inasmuch as he is the subject of more honorable alliances.* As there exists, between all the parts of God's holy kingdom, a close and endearing relationship, so each individual believer is united to God and to all holy beings by the best of all ties, that of a kindred affection. Every believer is permitted to address God as his father, and to approach him with the confidence which that title implies, while Christ is spoken of as his elder brother. He is attached to the family of heaven, to angels, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and will ever find a friend and brother in every holy being. And the covenant that binds the believer to God is everlasting. He never will be permitted to act so as to forget the privileges of that holy alliance that binds him to the whole family of pure beings.

Now as among men it uniformly attaches respectability and worth to one who can boast of high and honorable alliances, so the believer is entitled to whatever excellence may accrue to him from his union to the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Sanctifier, and to the members of that holy family who shall at last gather about the throne and be seated at the supper of the Lamb. It is impossible not to derive worth, and honor, and beauty, from an intercourse so free, and a sympathy so endearing as that which is the happy destiny of the believer.

Now the unbeliever, however high may be his views of himself, and however shielded he may be in his own self-importance, and self-esteem, and self-respect, can boast of no such high and holy alliances. Said our Lord to a company of unbelievers, and through them to all others, Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning. Thus the sinner may claim his descent or rather may avow his adoption by a father who has lost his character with heaven, and has sunk to unspeakable ignominy, and must own as his brethren none but the outcasts of the moral world.

True, God was his Creator, and will ever have a right to his service, but he has sold himself to commit iniquity, and has become the servant of sin; has forfeited all relationship to heaven and to all holy beings, and can derive no honor from any single alliance by which he is bound. The only covenant that holds him is a covenant with death, and from this union there attaches nothing to him but disgrace and infamy.

IV. *He is more excellent, inasmuch as he has better enjoyments.* He has a relish for higher pleasures. The unsanctified man extends his views to no objects but such as are seen and temporal. His best treasures are all perishable objects, objects which moths can eat, and rust corrupt, and thieves plunder. There is not an object on which he has set his heart that will be within his reach the first moment when he has quit the body, not one that will survive the ruins of the last day. And the objects he loves are as *poor* as they are *perishing*. While they abide they can furnish to their adorer but a poor, and scanty, and mean, and dying pleasure. He feels amid their highest enjoyments a distressing deficiency of happiness, and is a stranger to what deserves the name of enjoyment.

But the good man sets his heart on objects which are, in their nature, grand and imperishable. These objects are God and his kingdom. And the joy they yield him is solid and substantial. They lie beyond the influence of vicissitude, are of an unchanging nature, and will be equally within his reach when he is dead as while living. Hence he is said to have a joy with which the stranger intermeddeth not. As neither moth, nor rust, nor robber can touch his treasures, so nothing can diminish the joy they yield him. Hence he is prepared to meet, without horror or despair, those calamities which ruin, for ever, the man who has deposited all his treasures on earth. He can say: "Although the fig tree

shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." "When flesh and heart fail him, God is the strength of his heart, and his portion for ever." And what a worth do such rich enjoyments attach to their possessor! His vast capacity of happiness is partially filled. He not only lasts, but lives—and the life he lives bears some relation to the blessedness of heaven. Hence the righteous is more excellent than his neighbor.

V. *He entertains richer hopes.* Give the impenitent all they hope for, and their enjoyments would be poor. They can hope for no enjoyments, entirely distinct in their nature, from any they have ever felt. Hence their richest hopes, even the heaven they hope for, extends to no other than perishing and unsatisfying pleasures. Give them even the full extent of their wishes, give them the *best* objects, and *all* the objects they have ever loved, and let the possession be permanent, and still they would necessarily be poor. Their affections have never extended to any but material objects, and of course to none but dying objects.

But the good man, while he enjoys at present better pleasures than any other, entertains also richer hopes. The things unseen attract his gaze, and he counts among his choicest treasures the blessings that are in reserve for him beyond the grave. He would feel himself to be poor if he could fear that he were enjoying his best things now. He believes, and his "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." He is so comforted by the expectation of future good, that he can endure the loss of all those good things on which the impenitent place their supreme affections. Hence, in the present world, he becomes a pilgrim and a stranger, and seeks a city to come, which hath foundation, whose builder and maker is God. He is not dependant on this poor world for his enjoyments, nor will be ruined when all its treasures shall be consumed in the conflagration of the last day. His hopes, even in the darkest hour, enter within the veil, and he there discovers resources of blessedness that can never be exhausted.

VI. *The righteous is better than his neighbor, inasmuch as he is the heir of a better destiny.* The heirs of glory and the children of wrath resemble each other more now than they ever will hereaf-

ter. When grace is first implanted, the difference between the good man and the man unrenewed, is seemingly very small. From that moment they diverge for ever. Still, in the present life, the difference will always be comparatively small. But when the Christian shall heir his crown of glory, and shall be made a king and a priest to God and to the Lamb for ever, the difference between him and the lost sinner will be infinitely widened. *One*, it is said, shall come forth to everlasting life, and the *other* to shame and everlasting contempt. The one is to have his part with devils, and the other is to live, and reign, and rejoice with angels. One is to display in his eternal ruin the justice of a sin-avenging God, while the other is to stand in heaven an imperishable monument of redeeming grace. On the one God will frown for ever, while on the other he will for ever smile. The one will be removed from his presence, and must have his everlasting abode in perdition, while the other will be permitted to see his face without a veil, and beholding as in a glass his glory, will be changed into the same image, from glory to glory.

If, then, the good man does not at present appear to any very great advantage, there comes a day when he will. If his present deformities conceal his noble birth, and his present rags and poverty hide his high and holy destiny, still he will one day break from this disguise, and will be clothed with the honor and the attire of a prince, and live and reign with Christ for ever.

If at present the righteous is more excellent than his neighbor, there will come a day when his superior excellence will be seen and acknowledged by all beings, in all worlds. There will come a moment when every deformity will forsake him, when every blemish will be bleached, when every excellence of character will be illustrated, when he will awake in the likeness of his Lord, and wear his beauties for ever. A moment will arrive when such will be his character, and such his condition, that angels will respect him, and heaven do him honor.

REMARKS.

1. *If this subject should render the believer proud, he has entirely mistaken its design.* If he has any excellence of character, it is the gift of God; or if he has reached any state of joy, entertains any exalted hopes, sustains any honorable relationship, or is the heir of any high and holy destiny, it is all of grace. When heaven undertook to save him, he was a beggar and a wretch. And he is still the degenerate plant of a strange vine, and should for ever

remember the rock from whence he was hewn, and the hole of the pit from whence he was digged. If we are believers, the subject should make us thankful, but can never render us proud. We are conscious of having been totally deformed, and must know that there remains still in the heart a mass of moral pollution, exposing us to ruin, and rendering us worthy to be sent into eternal exile from the family of God. And, if one is finally saved, he is to be saved as a rebel, and is to be made an eternal monument of the power and grace of God, which can make a beggar rich, and a wretch happy. And the believer, although one day he shall be like his master, will carry with him, through all the years of heaven, a deep and humiliating sense of his own native defilements, and will owe his redemption to the pardoning mercy of God.

2. *If this subject should render the sinner envious, and dispose him to censoriousness and detraction toward the character which thus outshines his own, this, too, is the very opposite of the effect it should produce.* It should alarm him to find that he possesses deformity of moral character, but it should be his joy that some of his fellow-men have put off, in a measure, this deformity, and have been minded to favor with God and with heaven. It is a blessing to the world that God has sanctified some of its polluted population, else this world would be in a double and in a fearful sense, the valley of death. God would not hold that sun in its orbit, nor would he water this earth with his showers, did he, in his survey of its inhabitants, see nothing but moral pollution. Believers are the salt of the earth—are an honor to their friends, and a blessing to their enemies. They should be honored because Christ honors them; should be loved because he loves them; and should be treated kindly, because it is the purpose and the promise of God that they shall be happy.

SERMON LXVI.

KEPT OF GOD.

DEUTERONOMY XXXIII. 25.

Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.

THIS is a part of that blessing which Moses, the servant of the Lord, at the close of life, pronounced upon the tribe of Asher. That tribe had their inheritance in the north-western corner of Palestine, a hilly country, bordering upon the Mediterranean, and received a blessing, as did all the other tribes, suited to the part it was to act, and the station it was to fill among the thousands of Israel.

As the very name signifies a blessing, so Moses predicted to him a numerous increase; "Asher shall be blessed with children;" the permanent friendship of the other tribes. "Let him be acceptable to his brethren;" and, it is added, "Let him dip his foot in oil;" to indicate, probably, that his portion of the land of promise should abound in the oil of olives.

When it is added, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass," some have supposed that Moses had allusion to the vast mines of iron and brass which abounded in this portion of the land of promise, and were thus like shoes under their feet. This allusion, however, seems not so natural, as to suppose the prediction to mean, That as they were to have a mountainous country, were to travel in rough roads, climb the craggy precipice, and stand upon the slippery eminence, so they should be shod accordingly; their shoes should be iron and brass, meaning that they should be fitted for their allotment. If this be the meaning, the same idea is repeated in the last clause, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be;"—as thy days thy strength.

As no Scripture is of private interpretation, the text may be applied generally to the Lord's people, and contains a promise that they shall be fitted for every allotment of Providence; their feet shall be shod with the preparation of the gospel. The text has been thus applied in all ages of the Christian Church. Seldom has the believer been brought into perplexity when he has not giv-

en utterance to this prayer, "As my day is so let my strength be." And the history of the Church abundantly assures us that God has heard that prayer, and has granted his people timely strength. This delightful thought I shall endeavor to illustrate.

1. If God prosper his people he will still keep them humble. Occasionally he prospers them in worldly things. He permits them to gain wealth, and influence, and places them in circumstances of ease and independence. This appears to have been the case with Job, with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, with Joseph, and Solomon, and David, and with others more or less in every age of the Christian Church. It is, however, a small minority of the family of believers who have such an allotment. God does not seem to have viewed it as the safest path to heaven. Most of his people are poor, and many of them despised in the present world, that thus they may have their minds supremely occupied with the concerns of a better life.

But when God prospers his people he provides for their safety. He ever plants some thorn in the flesh, sends some messenger of Satan to buffet them, that thus they may be kept mindful that the present life is not their home, nor the present enjoyments their heaven. Job, lest he should be too much elevated, must come down from his height and lay in ashes, receive the reproaches of his wife and his servants, and must lose all his children. Abraham must have in his family a wild Ishmael, and Isaac a profane Esau. Jacob must mourn the fate of his idolized Joseph, and must be pained by the envy and treachery of his other children. David must witness murder and rebellion in his own family, and must hear it said that war should not depart from his house. He must bury his Absalom, and must be forbidden the honor of building the house of the Lord. Solomon must find a rottenness and a plague in every terrestrial enjoyment, and must write "vanity" on every thing that is done under the sun. And from that day to this, every good man who has been greatly prospered, has also been at some period of his life greatly humbled, or perhaps through the whole course of his elevation has experienced some mortifying and painful alloy, which like a millstone, bore him down from his giddy and dangerous eminence. An unpolished partner, or a vicious son, or a sickly constitution, or some other unpropitious circumstance, has ever preyed upon the spirits of the prosperous believer. And these mixtures of bitter ingredients in his cup of blessings, have kept him from selling his birthright for the perishing and contemptible objects of sense. He was led by these trials to

become sick of comforts so poor and so coarse, and to keep his mind fixed on heavenly things. Thus his strength was made equal to his day. When he came to die, he would quit the world without regret. He had found that every earthly sweet had its poison, and was prepared to cast an eye of faith into that world where its pleasures are unmixed. We have in the history of Lot a striking example of God's faithfulness to his promise. He chose a place of prosperous wickedness as his residence, but God directed that he should come out naked from his guilty retreat. Lot might have been ruined if Sodom had not been burned. But when he saw all his treasures and all his family perishing in the flames, it waked him from his worldly reveries, and brought him back to duty and to God. The whole of this amazing transaction said to Lot, in a language which he could not mistake, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." No worldly prosperity shall be able to subdue the fire of holy love that I have enkindled in your heart, or break the everlasting covenant that binds my heart to your better interests. Thus God's people are humble.

2. If God afflict his people, he will bestow those comforts which will keep them happy, and make them thankful. Hope is a grace which God is as much resolved to cherish in his people as humility. Hence, if he pain them, he is sure to preserve them from despair. While there is the deep conviction that his strokes are fewer than their crimes, and lighter than their guilt, there is too clear discovery of a parental hand which wields the rod, and a parental eye which smiles through every cloud that covers them.

Perhaps their lot is poverty. They are pressed all their days by the iron hand of indigence. At times they know not how their wants are ever to be supplied, how they shall obtain their bread and their raiment. There is consequent upon their poverty a loss of influence, and in the view of men a degradation of character that prevents their usefulness, and contracts their benevolent exertions. But the promise is that their strength shall correspond to their day—hence, in fulfilling this promise, God will keep them from all the moral evils incident to a state of penury. God will make them so afraid of sin as to keep them from coveting the gains of dishonesty. He will adapt their appetite to the coarseness of their provisions. He will give them to see his hand in the supply of their wants. Their faith will be strengthened by their daily experience, and they will find it as pleasant to receive their daily bread at the hand of God, as to be able to draw upon the treasury of their own. They are exonerated from those cares which

would otherwise intrude upon their seasons of devotion, and retard the growth of grace. They will not be permitted to doubt the superintendence of Divine Providence, because God permits his children to be poor. Their estimation of heaven will increase as they find that they are to have but few enjoyments here. At death there will be but few ties to be sundered. Their interest is all above. Thus as their day is so is their strength. And the case I have now described is not rare. Thus many a child of poverty, while to others he may seem wretched, is passing on to heaven, shod with iron and brass, and strong to pursue his pilgrimage. He will bring to the employments of heaven a nobler mind, and to its enjoyments a more enlarged capacity than many, who may think his lot hard, and his life a burden.

There is often connected with poverty a scene of toil and endurance. The pilgrimage is rough and unpleasant. The spirits are jaded with the fatigue requisite to feed and clothe the dying body. The mind is in such instances often unfitted for its heavenly employment. It seems grievous, that a spirit born from above should be retarded in its homeward course by cares and pains too mean for its powers. But the promise must meet this case too. These toils render rest more sweet, and the hope of an endless rest invaluable rich and sweet. The Sabbath is a welcome day; and the return of evening brings with it a pleasure to which the idle and the voluptuous and independent have no claim. The toils of the body subdue and tame the unhallowed passions; and we have seen often the strongest confidence in God, and the warmest gratitude, where it would seem the prospect must be profoundly dark, and the enjoyments few and small. One who has seen the old pilgrim, covered with a coarse and homely garb, and rising from his scanty meal, to pour forth his praise into the ear of his Maker, will never have a doubt, but that even in his condition, the promise of the text is all fulfilled. He toils hard, and would sometimes faint in his course, were not his feet covered with iron and brass, and his strength equal to his days.

But there is another scene in which it would seem that the promise fails. Some who are on their way to a better land, are afflicted with disease. Weakness, instead of strength, would seem to be their characteristic feature. If any thing escapes them but sighs and complaints, it seems incongruous. Life is filled up with pain and tears. And still in this very case, the promise may be verified. One may be weak in body, and yet strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Patience must have its perfect

work. We rise as high in the scale of Christian character, when we cheerfully suffer the will of God, as when we laboriously do his will. And if God bestow a submissive mind, and a spirit of patient endurance, he renders our strength equal to our day.

When the affliction is not personal, but falls upon our family and friends, we need, as much as in any other case, the support of this promise, and may expect its fulfilment. Believers have often feared that they should not be willing to see their friends die; and have looked forward to the parting scene with a fearful and horrid interest. In prospect, their own dissolution could not awaken a more agonizing sensation. Every fibre of the heart was tortured; and every earthly, and perhaps every heavenly comfort, lost its sweetness. But when the trying hour came, the promise was fulfilled, and the heart yielded its beloved object into the hands of Him who was still more beloved. The language was, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!" Parents have parted with an only child, without uttering a single complaint. I recollect a statement like this: A father was watching by the sick bed of an only son. It was seen that his soul was troubled, and that he often retired to pray, but appeared to return to the dying bed in the same state of mental agony as when he retired. At length there was seen upon his face a placid smile, and on being asked the cause, he replied, "O that I had just so dear a son to give up to God every day!" Another, who had experienced one stroke after another, till it was feared he would go into distraction, was at length heard to say, "The Lord intends to have my *whole heart* and he shall." But cases like these are not uncommon. God has only to smile upon his people, and they are too happy in him to mind any other friend. They see in him all that they desire, and are as happy as they could wish. The loss of earthly friends does but disengage the heart, and prepare it to engross all its energies in loving that friend which sticketh closer than a brother. Thus David mourned till his child was dead; he then wiped away his tears, and sat down to eat bread. To the best possible advantage have we seen the Christian through the tears that bedewed the corpse of a beloved friend. It was then that he needed the presence of his Master and his Lord, and then his promised presence was granted. He had no complaint to utter. God had done all things well. He had bestowed immeasurable mercies. The affliction was lighter than had been deserved. God might take what he had given. If a murmur began

to be uttered, this sentiment stilled it: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed."

And when the good man approaches the period of his own dissolution, he finds that he has trusted in a faithful God, who will permit nothing to fail of all the gracious things he has spoken. He had feared the hour that should close his probation, and had been through much of his life subject to bondage, through fear of death. But as the hour comes, the world which had allured him loses all its enchanting power, and heaven opens him an avenue to its glories, by which he becomes attracted in a new direction, and can without a sigh, let go his grasp of every thing below the sun. He had read, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee," and he now finds the promise true. His whole life had been like one stormy and dismal night, but the clouds break, and the darkness is dispersed, as he approaches the haven of rest. As flesh and heart fail him, God becomes the strength of his heart and his portion for ever. To live was Christ, but to die is gain. The fact is beyond controversy, that most of those who honor Christ in their life, enjoy his presence in death, find their strength equal their conflict in that last and dreadful hour.

But there sometimes comes a trial from men harder to bear than the pains inflicted by the immediate hand of God. And this is a case when the believer needs the fulfilment of the promises. He may not feel that he deserves to suffer at their hands. He may be conscious of wishing to promote their interest, while they injure him; and may feel that he has deserved of them a kinder treatment. Perhaps he has been their benefactor, and has waked their envy by attempts to promote their best interest. Here there is opportunity for the exercise of the best affections, meekness, patience, submission, and a spirit of forgiveness. These affections of the heart, as well as every other fruit of the Spirit, must be cultivated. And it cannot admit a doubt but that God places his people in those circumstances where the Christian character may be matured to the best advantage, in which circumstances should they not be prepared for their trials, they would but dishonor their Lord, and pierce themselves through with many sorrows. Hence the triumphant language of the apostles, in an hour of sore and distressing conflict, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus

might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." It is evident that the apostles were happy in the midst of their trials. As their days were, so God made their strength. They were troubled, perplexed, and persecuted; but, they were not distressed, nor forsaken, nor in despair, nor destroyed. They bore in their body the dying of the Lord Jesus, were assimilated to him in his sufferings, his griefs, and his tears; but the life also of Jesus was made manifest in their life. They exhibited not only the wounds and scars by which he was afflicted in the house of his friends, but there shone in their conversation the meekness, the humility, the watchfulness, the heavenly-mindedness, and the prayerfulness of the Lord Jesus. Thus while in the strength of Christ, they were strong, in his image they were lovely.

And what was done for the afflicted apostles, God will do for all his afflicted people. No weapon formed against them will prosper. In every temptation, he will provide a way of escape. He will be with them in six troubles, and in seven he will not forsake them. All things are theirs, "whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." The pledge, which God, in infinite compassion, has given to his redeemed family, that where he has begun a good work, he will carry it on until the day of Jesus Christ, implies a regular and constant supply of grace and strength, proportioned to the trials with which we meet, the conflicts in which we engage, and the sufferings we are called to endure. God has undertaken to bring his people to heaven, their growth in grace is a necessary preparation for that state, and that growth depends on a constant Divine influence. Hence he will never leave them, he will never forsake them. The light which has illumined their darkness will shine more and more unto the perfect day. They shall go from strength to strength, every one of them appearing in Zion before God.

REMARKS.

1. How safe and happy are the Lord's people. They are not exempt from trials, but are permitted to know that their strength shall be proportioned to their burdens. They are to be tempted, but shall be kept from falling; are to be afflicted, but the fruit of the affliction will be to take away sin; they are to bear a burden, and wear a yoke, but that yoke shall be easy, and that burden light; they are to be scourged, but the strokes will be fewer than their crimes, and lighter than their guilt. Hence they are the

blessed of the Lord. They can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth them. They are dear to his heart, who governs the world, who notices the sparrow and the worm, and will not suffer a hair of their head to perish. They have not yet arrived at heaven, but they are sure to reach that world, and live for ever in the presence of their Lord. And all this blessedness belongs to the meanest disciple of the Lord Jesus. Not one who has ever possessed a heavenly temper, will find his conflict too severe, or come short of that rest that remains for the people of God. They will be able in their dying song to tantalize their last enemy, and say, "O death! where is thy sting? Oh, grave! where is thy victory?"

2. Their present strength and courage do not decide how they shall appear in the hour of conflict, or what shall be their future condition. It is absurd that the believer should yield his hope because he does not find himself prepared for trials which have not yet come. He expects, in this case, a mercy never promised. God will prepare him when he tries him, will give him strength when he calls him to the onset. Our strength is not to be *greater* than our day, but *equal*. Should it be greater, we should become proud; should it be less, we should be discouraged. The interpositions of Divine mercy, will exactly suit the exigencies of our case. Christians may fear that they will not be prepared, should they be called to this and that affliction, and still may do honor to the Lord in the very trial. They may tremble to contemplate that stroke which shall sunder them from some beloved friend, and may be all their life time in bondage, through fear of death, and still may close the eyes of that friend, and their own eyes, with the most entire composure. Tender and delicate females have, when supported by the Divine presence, braved the terrors of a crucifix, and stood undaunted, while the fires were kindling to consume them. I have seen the widowed mother quite happy, while she softly shut the eyelids of a dying son, on whom she had hoped to lean as the prop of her old age, and for whom she felt a peculiar attachment. I have seen the father employed in blessing the Lord, while the object of his earthly hopes, and the only support of his name, lay amid the throes of an agonized death. And it happens with almost all the Lord's people, that they quit the world calm and happy. He whom they serve in life will not forsake them in death.

If, then, we find our strength equal to our present conflicts, we have nothing to fear. Our courage will kindle as the battle

thickens, and our strength increase as we march on to the more desperate onset. If our present strength is sufficient for our present purpose, this is all that God has promised, and is enough. Here is the test by which we are to try our character. Do we submit cheerfully to present disappointments, and exhibit a right temper under all the present little corroding incidents of this conflicting world? He who feels no impatience under the aching of a tooth, nor pines with regret over the loss of a dollar, may hope to exhibit the same submission and the same patience, when he feels the cold chill of death, and parts with all that he had ever loved in this world. We are to live under the same government for ever; and if we can entirely approve of the present Divine ministrations, we may rest assured that the government of God will fill us with joy through all future periods.

SHORT SERMONS,

OR

OUTLINES OF DISCOURSES.*

No. I.

THE SINNER'S DESPERATE DEPRAVITY.†

JEREMIAH III. 5.

Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldest.

THIS passage evidently teaches the doctrine, that *men are as depraved as they can be in present circumstances*. The charge is made by the infinitely Holy One, and can be fully substantiated against every member of the unregenerate family. The justice of the charge may appear from a consideration of the following positions:

I. That God in his providence has surrounded the sinner with many circumstances operating powerfully to modify human character.

II. That by these circumstances every sinner is actually restrained in his wickedness, and held back in his downward career.

III. That every sinner does make the attempt, and succeeds as far as God will let him, to sunder these ligatures that would hold him fast to reason, hope, and heaven.

Among the circumstances which illustrate the first position, I mention,

1. Education. This makes Christendom differ from the dark

* The following plans of sermons, contain heads of thought, with partial amplification, prepared and used by the Author in extemporaneous preaching.

† This skeleton was taken by the reporter of the Charleston Observer, when delivered by the author in Charleston, S. C.

places of the earth, which are full of the habitations of cruelty. This makes the same land differ from what it was while a land of idolatry. This makes us to differ from our forefathers when under the superstition and tyranny of the Druids. This occasions the difference between us and the savage of the western wilds. Education, then, operates greatly in modifying character, and in preventing men from being as bad as they would be.

2. Human law has a similar effect. How near right, think you, would men be, if they were not controlled by human laws? Look at some country while in a state of anarchy. Look at some city or village where the influence of law is suspended. Look at France, while under the reign of terror, when law was abrogated, and see one company after another pass under the guillotine; and the executioners of to-day the victims of to-morrow; and, tell us, is not character greatly modified by municipal law?

3. By the law of God. If men have no other belief in it, but that which may be denominated the faith of history, it still greatly modifies human character. Men have been sorry a thousand times that God ever issued his law. They have hated to read, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." They have been sorry to read, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy;" "Thou shalt not commit adultery;" "Thou shalt not kill;" "Thou shalt not steal," &c. But men have been in a measure restrained by these laws, while they have hated the Lawgiver, and despised his statutes.

4. The troublesome supervision of conscience has greatly modified human character. This everlasting censorship, while it has held men back from sin, has been hated, and warred against, and scowled upon, by the whole human family.

5. The whole Gospel,—the law drawn out into offensive interference with the sinful pleasures and follies of men, has modified human character beyond all calculation. It so commends itself to their reason, and applies such power to their consciences, that it becomes exceedingly difficult to withstand it. It is so tender, majestic, commanding, and reasonable, that it for a time melts and overawes many who ultimately reject its provisions.

6. All the Gospel institutions—the Sabbath, the sanctuary, the church-going bell, the Lord's supper, the ordinance of baptism, every thing associated with Christian worship, operates in modifying human character, and rendering it in appearance, better than it is.

7. The desire of heaven has the same effect. None, perhaps, are so abandoned as not to hope that they may, after all, live and be happy after death. The bare possibility that they shall reach

heaven, and wish to unite in the song of redemption, prevents them from being as wicked as they would be. This operates as a powerful restraint, and helps greatly to modify character.

8. The fear of hell, also, holds back many from the commission of crime. Men are afraid that what they have heard respecting hell is true. Though the subject often excites their unhallowed mirth, it is a mirth which has its misgivings. Their very laughter betrays their fears. And though they trifle with the thought of everlasting burnings, it is with the manifest design of keeping their courage up. The fear of hell thus operates in modifying the character, perhaps even of the most worldly.

9. The expectation of a judgment has the same effect. They have some apprehension that they may be called to answer at the bar of God for their deeds on earth. They have "a fearful looking for" of this dread reality. They think it may be true that God will bring them into judgment, for every work, whether it be good or evil, and apportion his awards accordingly. And hence, this apprehension serves as a wonderful restraint upon their character.

10. Public sentiment is a great preventive of crime. Men are so constituted as to be obliged to respect public sentiment. They cannot endure the indignation of a whole community; and public sentiment in Christian lands favors virtue, and frowns on vice. The assassin is thus disarmed—the thief becomes honest—the swindler pays his debts—because public sentiment compels him. No one has daring enough to be utterly indifferent to the good opinion of all his acquaintance; and character is thus greatly modified.

11. The domestic affection produce the same result. The silken cords which entwine around the family circle, prevent the commission of many a crime. The father, the husband, the mother, the wife, the son, the brother, the daughter, the sister—all the endeared relations which the members of a family sustain to each other, and which are strengthened every day, operate greatly in the formation of character. How many a son has been saved from ruin, through the affection which he bore to his mother? How often has a sister's entreaties tamed the ferocious spirit of a brother, and rendered it yielding and lovely.

Thus we see how curbed men often are, while in their native state. This world, then, is in disguise. God, who only knows the full influence of these modifying circumstances, knows what is in man. Therefore, when he looks down from heaven, he still pronounces "the whole head sick and the whole heart faint,"

“every imagination of the thoughts evil,” specious appearances to the contrary notwithstanding.

Thus we have recounted some of the circumstances which modify the human character. These are, indeed, of vast importance. They result in what we term *civility, good morals, &c.*—all bearing kindly upon the present condition of man. They all speak the wisdom and kindness of God,—they are so many golden chains let down to earth, to modify its moral corruptions. God is good in every such ligature, by which he holds men within the reach of that blessed influence, which can sanctify and make them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. We ought, then, to thank God for these modifying circumstances, and pray that he would put these chains all on, and keep them on, till even the vilest and most obdurate shall yield to his infinite love. We ought to view men in more hopeful circumstances, in proportion as God shall hold them by these moral bonds. For, while a young man respects the Sabbath, and is obedient to his parents, there is more hope of him than afterwards. While he is afraid to swear, we may hope that he will begin to pray. While he dare not avow open infidelity, we may hope, if we do our duty, that he will yet believe revealed truth, to the saving of his soul.

II. By these circumstances every sinner is actually restrained, in his wickedness, and held back in his downward career. In proof of which, we observe,

1. Men are *uneasy* under these circumstances, which shows them to be restraints. Let men be unrestrained, and they will be easy. It is only pain of some kind that renders them uneasy, and willing to change their position. Hence they will not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reprov'd.

2. Men are constantly trying to alter their circumstances. But they are too indolent by nature to try to alter their circumstances, unless they are circumstances of restraint.

So, when a raging fever burns,
They shift from side to side by turns;
And 'tis a poor relief they gain,
To change the place, but keep the pain.

3. When men at length alter their circumstances in any of these respects, they often show out a worse character; manifesting what they would have been before, if they might, if these restraints had been sundered and they let loose upon the world.

4. When these restraints are all removed, men are uniformly far more wicked than if they had not been imposed. All will admit this. It is therefore manifest, that these circumstances operate powerfully in restraining men from a career of sin and ruin. Even in the Church itself, there are vast multitudes who become apostates, because their apparent goodness was made up by such restraints: they had really no concern for the glory of God, and were not religious because they loved religion. Beware, then, lest you be left to fall away from your supposed faith, and hurry on to destruction. Not only should professors fear, but the impenitent also should fear and tremble; because God holds them as accountable beings, completely in his power; and in kindness, for a time, lets down ten thousand restraints upon them. God now controls the madness of his enemies. He puts his hook in their nose, and his bridle in their lips; binds them with his restraints, and holds them, perhaps, in apparent subjection. In this the character of hypocrites and unbelievers is distinguished from the truly religious. Their wickedness is merely suppressed, not subdued: their amiable appearances are produced by restraining providence, not by converting grace. The heart of the real Christian is not suppressed, but radically changed. The grace of God has transformed the tiger into a lamb, and the wolf into a kid. The Christian abandons sin because he hates it, and follows after holiness because he loves it. This constitutes the beauty of the Christian character, and this the distinguishing glory of heaven. There will be *there* no restraint but love. The whole population will love to do right; and impelled by love alone, will employ, in doing right, their energies for ever. On the other hand, as the character of the wicked is here varied and modified by restraints, God will only need to take off those moral ligatures, and substitute the everlasting chains of darkness, to surround them with the horrors of hell. The exceeding baseness of the wicked appears in this—that all these powerful restraints are required to hold them fast in mercy, and prevent them from doing worse; and the horror of hell in this—that all its population will love to do wrong, and in wrath be let loose to do it, so far as they can amidst fetters which will hold fast only to gall, and chains which will confine only to burn. How amazing, in view of all these considerations, is the operation of these providential circumstances in restraining the career of the wicked! We are thus prepared to consider the remaining position, viz.:

III. That every sinner does make the attempt, and succeeds as far as God will let him, to sunder these ligatures that would hold him fast to reason, hope, and heaven.

One would think that a sinner would not wish to have these kindly ligatures sundered. Where may he wander, or rather where may he not wander, and against what rock may he not dash, and into what bottomless vortex may he not plunge with all his interests, and perish with his all, when he shall have thrown off the fastenings that hold him to the throne of the Eternal? While we go the ground over, and see how he raves, and rages, and flounces like a bull in the net, and would break loose from God, if he might, whatever be the probable result upon himself, and his hopes, and his family, and his character, and whatever the relationship he must sunder, we are amazed at every step of the experiment, and we are amazed at the result, and at the blindness of the immortal being that is in a measure let loose to try his skill in the awful experiment, till God gives him up to hardness of heart and blindness of mind, and leaves him a prey to himself, and he is destroyed in his own waywardness. Let us, then, trace his steps, and see his ravings:

1. See how he breaks over and breaks through the restraints of *education*. He tries to throw off what he knew of God, and all he had learned of the Savior, and of the operations of the Holy Spirit; all he had learned of the operations of the Godhead, in the history of the Church. And when he cannot forget, he raves at his own recollections, and madly reproaches the mind that cannot forget, and will not retrace and throw off what it is now to him a burden and curse to recollect. But the Bible rushes upon his unholy mind with the vividness of a new, and fresh, and hated story. O, that he had never read that book! he cries; that his mother had not furnished him a Bible when he left his home, or had not made him promise to read it every day! But if in his senses he may not forget, perhaps he may induce God to put out his mind, and destroy the powers of recollection. And this is now the only prayer he makes, and the only thing he cares for. In the mean time, he hates the very lessons that he learned in school, and would tread them all down as one does the worthless weeds that are overgrowing his path in a garden. But,

2. When he has tried for a time, but has tried in vain, to retrace the process of education, he finds himself reined in by *human laws*. If he cannot forget God, perhaps he can snap asunder the power of human control. Man cannot be omniscient. He can evade all

human ties. He can rise above the law, and tread it down like the mire of the street. Or he can violate its precepts and despise its regulations, and hold on and hold out in despite of all its sanctions, presuming in his heart that God will not know, neither will the Almighty consider it. If the law does say, "Thou shalt not violate the rest of the Sabbath," he can drink and carouse, or lounge and loiter, and the world will only esteem him the better, especially if he add generosity and liberality to his infidelity and to his deeds of daring and outrage. He may violate any law that lays its restraints on this side of the judgment. Perhaps there may come no day of hated and holy retribution, and then he can have the infernal satisfaction of laughing at the Christians. If the failure of the Divine promise of such a day should ruin the world, it will not, as he conceives, ruin him. He would be willing that no such appointment should be fulfilled, even though the failure should tarnish for ever the character of Jehovah. If the law does say, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," if he can violate it, and the crime be hid, and no human tribunal take cognizance of the deed, he cares not for the law. He cares not what misery his iniquities occasion, if his deeds do not break into open daylight. If it break the heart of a mother, and if a father writhe under the agony of a ruined son, he does not care for the tears of that mother, nor the agonies of that father. The deed he has done he does not intend shall come to light, in the present life, and he can easily bring himself to care for nothing beyond. Thus he throws off nearly all the restraints of human law, and contents himself with the purpose never to commit murder, or theft, or any crime that would draw him out to the light. Thus he blesses himself in his own delusion, and trusts for safety in his own righteousness. But he meets with more disturbance yet.

3. From the *law* of God. Impenitent and unbelieving, he has read in that law what, if he cannot put down, he is a ruined man: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Thus is dashed, at the first stroke, the whole fabric of a dark and fatal idolatry. If man worships his money, or his merchandize, or his farm, or his friend, or any thing but God, or gives any thing else his supreme affection, even if he does not professedly worship it, he is condemned of God. And he adds, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." But how unfashionable it would be to care about this commandment, and let the apprehension that God "will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain," produce a serious moment, or a pang of distress! It is so noble

not to care about God, or what God can say, or do, and it would be so cowardly, so ungentlemanly, to be afraid to sin, that the offender just breaks this grand and controlling ligature easier than many that would seem to have no such power to bind and to restrain. An effort not so mighty as that which sundered Samson's green withes, puts them all aside. But,

4. Not quite so easily does he dispose of the troublesome supervision of *conscience*. This vicegerent of Heaven stays often many a month after open war is declared. It sometimes will hold close conference with the heart, although the heart may wish to be alone. It is that power that will not die, nor see corruption. It will not go to sleep in the grave: it will watch, even while the wretch is dying, to secure the honor of God, and gather courage for a fresh attack just by the dying pillow. And the agony of its first onset in the unseen world, hard by the place of dying, devils cannot know. For they have never spurned a dying Savior, and they have never died.

But all the embrasures that can be opened upon the soul by this moral avenger must be closed, or its eternal thunders will be heard and felt. Yes, even here the heart sometimes says to conscience, as Satan to the Savior, "Art thou come to torment me before the time?" But it is the conflict of desperation, and, like the murderer who came into close and terrible embrace with the man whose blood he would spill, and was heard to say, "You must die," and with that saying put forth a thrust that forced the dagger to his heart; so in assailing conscience, to put down its spirit of admonition, it must be assailed *desperately*, and if the victory cannot be otherwise secured, it must be drawn to the crater, where the wretch stands to torment himself, and to be hardened by a view of its fires; and here may perhaps end the conflict, till it is renewed again on the other side of time. Now there is but little left for the sinner to do. Conscience has ceased its admonitions. But still he has a slight conflict.

5. With the *institutions of the Gospel*. We noticed in his conflict with the law, which spreads abroad its troublesome interference with his lusts and his pleasures, how readily he could contrive to evade its claims. But the Gospel, like some faithful party in the field of blood, still keeps up the chase, and deeply wounds at every shot. It proves not so easy as was apprehended to still this avenger of justice. It pursues the sinner close through all the narrow lane of life, and even down to the gate of hell, unless sovereign grace effectually interpose, or long injured mercy say, "Let

him alone." But see the ungrateful struggle of the sinner to cast off this fastness of heaven—this Gospel of salvation. Every church-going bell fills his conscience with guilt, and each return of the day of rest reminds him of the quiet of his paternal roof, where a mother's prayers used to be joined with the Sabbath day, in rendering the time of rest too holy to be endured. He must pervert its holy design, or writhe and bleed under the lashes of a guilty conscience. If he can get some scene of iniquity open, to prevent his soul from thinking; if the theatre may be opened, or any other house of death, or he may sport himself with the pleasures of the turf, and thus kill time, and throw off this one additional fastness of heaven, and put himself afloat upon the sea of life, then he can be comparatively happy, boasting like the school boy's kite,—

*See how yon crowd of gazing people
Admire my height above the steeple;
How would you wonder, did you know,
But what a kite like I can do?*

It tugged and pulled, while thus it spoke,
To break the string; at last it broke;
Deprived at once of all its stay,
In vain it tried to soar away;
Unable its own weight to bear,
It fluttered downward through the air;
Unable its own course to guide,
The wind soon plunged it in the tide.

Thus it will not fail to happen to the immortal being who shall try to do without the Gospel. He may go off from God, and despise the power that would pull him back, but he will go to wander amid the blackness of darkness for ever!

Had I time, I would go on through the whole catalogue of restraints, and show how, one by one, the sinner wantonly throws them off. But I can notice only one or two more particulars.

6. The hardened sinner would dislodge himself from all thought of heaven or fear of hell. And yet these are very powerful ligatures, and often the last to be sundered. When men think of relinquishing heaven, they sometimes forget that awakening previous question, "If I abandon the thought of heaven, where shall I then be? What means that worm which never dies? What mean those chains of darkness—and that gnashing of teeth—and that quenchless fire?" Ah! when the sinner is arrested by such questions, and must answer them, and answer them, too, under the operations of the Holy Spirit, he will find it hard work to answer

them, and sin on. The throes produced will be like those of the second death; and whoever has tried, will not need again to ask what is meant by the undying worm. That eternal separation from the society of the good, and that imprisonment with the devil and his angels, if it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder, when only anticipated,—what will the reality be? I am scared at my own question. It will be a death that never dies—a living death! But,

7. There is still another thought. The sinner must have broken through all the restraints of *public sentiment*, before we can know how bad he would be; and this ligature he tries to snap asunder. But he will find that public very populous, before he gets through. After he has gone his round with mortals, and has learned not to care what *men* think of his conduct, he must cease, too, to care what is thought of his deeds, in heaven. Those beings that have kept watch over his pillow by night, that have warded off fire and pestilence, or waked him in time to flee, that have loved his father and mother, and love them still in heaven,—what will they think of the puny worm who has brought himself to despise them, and sport with their opinion. But even this is not all; for devils, too, have their opinion. And he must cease to care what they think of him in hell. And their judgment, remember, is not depraved like their hearts. One might almost as well attempt to silence the opinion of heaven as of hell. The murmurs of that dark world against the man who casts its burning sentiments behind his back, will be like the distant roar of a thousand cataracts, or like the dashing of as many icebergs conflicting with each other in some boundless polar sea. And,

Finally: there yet remains to be noticed one of the most powerful motives of restraint, *the domestic affections*. It is impossible to guess what men would be, till they throw off the hold, for instance, that a mother has upon a profligate son. We must recollect how John Newton managed, and how miserable he was, while a mother lived to hold the cord entwined about his heart. When every other tie had been sundered, the mother kept hold of him by this; when his character was gone, when he had descended to the meanness of serving a black mistress, and of eating his morsel from her leavings; when her favor was life to him, and her frown filled him with despair, and he had no other friend, then he remembered a mother's counsels and a mother's prayers; and then and there gave his heart to his Savior. There, from Africa's dark soil, and from a condition and character darker still, he first

lifted his eyes to heaven, and began to breathe eternal life; and he lives now, and sings redeeming grace in heaven, and tells in every song, how hard it is for a sinner to conflict with the restraints of infinite love.

But all these are a part only of the circumstances, the restraints, that go to modify human character; all of which the sinner deliberately strives to neutralize. And if in nothing else has he shown a character bad as language can describe, or actions prove, he has given a climax of the whole in his attempts to sunder all such ties, and cut himself loose from God, and from the whole family of kindly influences that would save his soul from death.

Such is the obstinacy, the rebelliousness, the ingratitude of the sinner: must he not, then, be born again, have a new heart and a new spirit, or never enter into the kingdom of God?

No. II.

RECIPE FOR A REVIVAL.

2 CHRONICLES VII. 14.

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their evil ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins, and heal their land.

THE manner of the approach of God's people to him, so as to secure his blessing, and draw down covenant mercies on the Church and the world, is the grand secret of being useful and happy. I consider this thought amply and beautifully illustrated in the text, leaving scarcely any important point untouched. In illustrating this subject, my plan will be purely textual.

1. The Lord has in this world a precious people. They are "called by his name." They are "dear to him as the apple of his eye." He has "engraven them on the palms of his hands." They are more precious to him than any other portion of the creation. Hence we hear it said, the "Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance."

2. They are called by his name.

In great condescension to his people, God thus lets them bear his name. Jacob was so named when he wrestled with the angel

of the covenant at Penuel. And the Christians are so called, because they partake of the character of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we care not whether this name was given them by way of reproach or otherwise. It honors them, and if they honor it, they will promote their own best interests. In Eastern countries, it is a common fact for kings and princes to give their own name to strangers whom they would honor. And I suppose God has, for the same reason, and in reference to this custom, permitted his people to wear his name, while they stay in this distant world, away from his palace and their house.

3. If they shall humble *themselves*.

God seems to have put it into the power of his people to make *themselves* what he would have them. He shapes them, through their own agency, to be instruments of usefulness to the Church, and to be blessings to the world at large. There are many things brought to their view which are calculated to humble them. God may give them a distinct view of their own hearts, or of the spirituality and extent of his law. Thus permitting them to look to the rock whence they were hewn, and the hole of the pit whence they were digged, they are prepared to walk softly before the Lord, and take the very place he would have them take in his temple, and do the very things he would have them do for his honor.

4. And pray.

But what can this mean? Are not the Lord's people a praying people? and has it not been characteristic of them, "Behold he prayeth?" True as this may be, his people become cold in prayer, and virtually neglect to pray in the manner that God dictates. They often lose sight of God, and their prayers do not come up into his ear, nor reach his heart, nor draw forth those kindred emotions of his soul, which is the very design of prayer, and which, more than anything besides, secures the blessing of Heaven, as we shall see in the next particular.

5. And seek my face.

But what can this mean? Can the people of God pray, without seeking the face of God? I suppose there may be this defect in their prayers, that they do not seek his face. God will not have his people approach him in that manner, which is characteristic of a mere slave, who may not open his mouth in the presence of his master, but who stands in the outer apartment of his house, and sends in his petitions by proxy. He would have us come immediately to his face. And there is one sweet text that encourages us to do so—"O, my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in

the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." I do not believe that God ever intended his people should pray to him in that distant manner, which exhibits them as strangers.

6. And turn from their evil ways.

This is a condition in the hypothesis very important. If Christians do not turn from their wicked ways, they will not honor God, and God will not hear their prayer. He does not here define what are the wicked ways we are to turn from, but leaves the Christian's mind to operate under the influence of the Spirit. I am led to believe that any wicked ways, persevered in, will effectually shut out our prayers.

And now the promise—

1. Then will I hear from heaven.

The way is prepared now for the Christian to offer any prayer he pleases, that is dictated by the Holy Ghost. To be a worker together with God in rendering the Church holy and the world happy. We have heard a great deal about the prayer of faith, but it strikes me there is too little account made of the preparation of faith which we here see carried out. "Then will I hear from heaven." I will hear any prayer my people shall choose to offer. I will hear them whenever they have this preparation. When Daniel would carry before God the case of the captive tribes, he began to pray at the time of offering up of the evening sacrifice. A council seemed to be called in heaven, and the decree went out, that his prayer should be heard and his request granted, and an angel came to whisper it in his ear while yet on his knees. And when Peter, sleeping between the two soldiers, cast his eyes up to heaven, the time of his deliverance came, his chains fell off from him, the gates of his prison flew open, and he was free. Thus God seems to have fixed the time when he will answer the prayers of his people, and has made it depend on their preparation to offer the prayer, when their requests shall be granted. There are two distinct blessings, which God is ready to pour out on his people, when they have thus prepared themselves to offer the effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous, that availeth much.

In the first place, God will *forgive their sins*. As often as the Holy Ghost thus leads them to prepare themselves, he forgives them. Thus the people of God may be pardoned in the morning, again at noon, and in the evening; they may be pardoned

on the Sabbath, and through the week ; and thus pardons be strung, like precious gems, along the whole course to heaven.

In the second place, he will *heal their land*. This includes the removal of any calamity that may have come upon them—whether war desolates, or pestilence lays waste, or mildew blights, or any other woe be upon them, every evil is removed, when they thus come prepared to the throne of grace. Thus there is dependent on the prayers of God's people the removal of all those calamities which are preying on the life-blood of the world. The same may be said with respect to the bestowment of all those positive blessings, of which his people, or the world, stand in perishing need. They may all be summed up in a precious revival of his work, by which he gladdens his Churches, blesses his ministers, and loves his people, and by which he holds back the world from those strides in iniquity which would carry them beyond the reach of grace and of glory.

REMARKS.

1. If any say, that this makes a revival depend too much on human contrivance ; I can only say, it is God's own contrivance. It is the plan he contrived for his ancient people, and the plan he still pursues with his Church under the gospel, and probably ever will, to all future ages. He makes his people glad in his house of prayer for ever.

2. Thus the Church, like the ladder which Jacob saw, becomes a medium of communication between God and the world, presenting to him its wants, and communicating to it his favors.

3. If this be so, how important and responsible a situation the Christian fills ! and how important that he should perform the duties incumbent on him !

No. III.

JEREMIAH X. 5.

They weary themselves to commit iniquity.

THIS is a suffering world in more senses than one. We are subject to toil and labor in consequence of the apostacy, and to perpetual vexation of mind, in consequence of our opposition to the Divine will. The sinner, therefore, is compelled, if he will *continue in sin*, to maintain a mental war which devours and exterminates from his breast all the elements of vital joy. Determined not to repent—yet anxious for happiness—compelled by the necessities of his nature to cry out for peace of mind, yet averse to holiness, its necessary means, he toils hard, and travails in pain, and ripens in agony here, for the *agony eternal*, which lies before him. To delineate the particulars of this mental war, I remark,

I. *The sinner must sustain morality without piety.* He must be moral or miserable. The vices are so many demons, resolved into their original elements. They torment a man before his time. Disgrace; loss of property; of all real friendship; of domestic affection; of the health and life; of self-respect and elevated companionship; all wait around a course of vice. The vicious man sinks deeper and deeper in the mire. The reptiles of the slough, in which he journeys, grow more and more venomous and malignant. He must be moral or miserable. It is hard work, however, to maintain morality without religion. The passions are strong; the world is full of temptation; the soul is liable to be beat off from its hold on morality, unless recovered by grace; its course will be tremendous, the progress of its depravity vehement, and great the fall of it.

II. *He must feel secure without a promise.* No man can realize the final wreck of the soul, and feel happy in the prospect. The mind, in the ordinary stages of depravity, shudders and recoils, and hides itself from the prospect. Even the hardest incrustations of sin cannot prepare the soul to look fully at eternal wailing un-

daunted. There it stands, that never ceasing view ; that vivid painting of the future ; that dark, shadowy, but distinct, and fearful representation of utter ruin ; it is hung out before the soul by the stern truth of God, from behind every scene of guilt, and along every winding of the soul's weary path. How can he feel secure ? Yet how can he bear to face that vision ? If he looks to nature, it warns him ; to his companions, they are falling into the arms of the monster. He is warned in the family circle, in the scene of futurity, in the haunts of dissipation, around the grave ; every where a compassionate eternity weeps about him ; angels of grace draw aside the veil of the pit, and with earnest countenance cry, "Escape for thy life !" If he looks to the Bible, he has no promise. If he thinks of mercy, no promise. If he looks to the end, there is the falling flood and its dreadful roar ; and its fearful spray, and its havoc of apostate mind, in the boiling depths below, but no rainbow of promise. He reads all around him the startling inscription, "*The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him.*"

III. *He must hope for heaven, while forming a character for perdition.* He must hope, and will hope, even if he knows his hope will do no good. Heaven is the only place of final rest ; if he miss it he is lost, undone for ever. Holy as it is, and much as he hates holiness, he must enter there, or eternally be an undone man. No man can bear the idea of confessed, manifest, public, and hopeless, irrecoverable disgrace. Every man, therefore, clings to the idea of a final heaven, as long as he can. But here the sinner has a hard task. His supreme selfishness leads him to hold on upon the idea of rest after this life, but that very selfishness is making his failure sure. The cords of habit are twined all about his character ; they are not threads of flax, except when the Spirit rends them. They are *strong* cords to the wearied sinner, and he shall be holden by them, if he will continue to sin, and all the joints and departments of his character will be fitly compacted together, to make it the meet habitation of eternal life. It is hard work while these formations of character are going on, for a soul to be shut up to the necessity of keeping alive a hope of heaven, yet this the sinner must perform.

IV. *He must resist Christ without a cause.* He is supposed impenitent and determined on continued sin. Exposed to endless death, he has an offer of Christ and salvation. The claims of Christ are not only just, but compassionate and benevolent. "If he

will sin, he must contend against the Savior in the very interpositions of his astonishing, overwhelming, agonizing mercy. This is hard work for the conscience; the wheels of probation drag heavily; their voice grates fearfully; their cry of retribution waxes loud.

V. *He must try to be happy while guilty.* This he cannot accomplish, yet he must try. He will fail in every attempt, yet he must renew the trial. If he will not repent and obtain pardon in the blood of Christ, then he must retain his guilt, and feel it on his conscience, and groan under it as it continually grows heavier, while he must struggle for peace. The nature of happiness renders his efforts necessary. He will make them, and will always fail. He will choose a thousand phantoms; he will grasp after every shadow; he will be stung a thousand times, yet will he renew the toil, till wearied, hopeless, and sullen, he lies down to die. It is hard toil to do what a guilty, unbelieving sinner is compelled to do in trying to be happy.

VI. *He must have enough of the world to supply the place of God in his heart.* The heart must have a supreme object; God is able to fill it. On him the intellect may dwell, and around the ever-expanding developments of his character, the affections, like generous vines, may climb, and gather, and blossom, and hang the ripe cluster of joy for ever; but the sinner shuts out God, every vision of his character is torment, and he turns away to fill the demands of his heart with the world. He has commenced a thankless task; he has enlisted in a severe service. The whole world, if gained, would infinitely fail, yet he can gain but little of it, and that little is vanity and vexation of spirit. Yet painful and hopeless as this may be, the sinner must toil at it till he dies.

VII. *He must arrange matters for death, while he is afraid to think of dying.* He must work to get property for his children *when he is gone*. He must put his business in a train, so that it may be settled advantageously *when he is gone*. He must do all this on the strength and under the impulse of an idea at which he trembles.

VIII. *He must read the Bible, whilst he is afraid to think or pray.* This is especially true of the worldly-minded professor. If he keeps up the form of family worship, or attends at the house of God, the Bible, the holy and accusing book, is in his way. Its

truths lie across his path. He cannot turn aside, he must trample over them, while he beholds them under his feet. He knows that his footsteps are heard around the *retributive* throne. If driven to console himself by the promises of error, the sinner has to pervert and wrestle with the Bible. Its denunciations catch his eye, and burn him while he tries to explain them away. Its promises turn into curses within his soul, as he attempts to incorporate them in his hopes.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS.

1. Have we no compassion for a suffering world? How little, Christian brethren, do we feel for the wretched, toiling, dying sinner, with whom we associate; for the fond relative with whom we mingle affections; for the multitudinous mass of mind, ruined, undone, and miserable, that are ripening all around us for endless woe?

2. Can we do nothing to relieve this miserable condition of our fellow-men? We can do much if we will only feel its nature and tendencies, and bear it before a compassionate God. If we will but take the gospel, and lead its giant motives forth, and lean upon the Spirit's power, the work of renovation, of redemption, and of joy will roll on. Every day cries aloud, and all around us, for our awakening to duty. The time for God's people to pray, and awake, and endeavor mightily, is now—and with most of us, *now* or *never*.

No. IV.

LUKE X. 11.

Notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.

I. What is meant by the kingdom of God? Sometimes the kingdom of God means the place of the blessed in heaven. Sometimes it means merely the visible church. Sometimes it seems to mean the church *invisible*, or the collection of real believers. Sometimes, as in the text, it signifies the gospel merely—which describes the king, and gives us the laws and regulations of the kingdom, and permits us to look in upon the very seat of his holy empire.

II. *When may the gospel, which, as we see, means the kingdom of God, be said to come nigh to an individual or a people?*

A material object, we know, may come within a greater or less distance—may come within a mile, or two, or ten. It may come within the sight of the eye, or the hearing of the ear, or the reach of the arm.

1. So the gospel may come to a near or a more remote proximity. It may come within the hearing of the ear. To many, in heathen lands, it has never made this approach: they have only heard *of* the gospel, but have never heard *the* gospel. They have heard that the missionaries have come to other portions of their dark territory, but have never seen them, or listened themselves to its glad accents. No messenger of eternal life has ever stood in their presence, and sounded the good news. They have never been told the conditions upon which salvation is offered them, or been invited to come to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

To all, in gospel lands, it has made a nearer approach; they have heard the conditions upon which mercy is offered them, and have had described to them the kingdom of God in all its fascination and in all its glory.

2. It makes a still nearer approach, when it reaches the understanding. Men not only hear the gospel, but think about it, and perhaps become speculative believers; and possibly even professors of religion; and it may be, even sustain a good Christian character, when, after all, the gospel may never have approached

them but to this second degree of nearness. It has passed through the ear, and lit upon the understanding, and floats upon the surface of the mind, as oil upon the ocean, without exhibiting any propensity to amalgamate.

3. The gospel, or kingdom of God makes a still nearer approach, when it passes through the understanding, and reaches the conscience; and there it holds its position, and preys upon the conscience, which may be subjected to a more or less severe pressure, according to circumstances.

If a husband or wife is subjected to the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost, or a child is made to submit to the power that renders him a new creature; then it is that the truth presses upon the conscience with a force unequalled in any other circumstances,

But we must stop to inquire,

4. Why the gospel is brought thus nigh to some who are finally lost? This is the nearest approach it ever makes to a soul that does not submit to its overtures. If the gospel stays here long, the sinner must become, under its corroding influence, a *cunning sinner*. He must thus parry every point of truth presented in the book of God, until finally, he becomes a *hardened sinner*, and browbeats the anathemas of the gospel with a hardness that is veteran and desperate. Soon it will render him a *caviling sinner*, and adroit at parrying every thrust it makes at his heart. It will not be long in rendering him a *wretched sinner*, hardened to the greatest degree of obduracy—as when one is represented as exposed to the lightnings of heaven, until his flesh is hardened to the intensity of a rock.

But several important points are now in a process of being settled, while the sinner is held in this condition, and truth is beating upon his naked soul.

1. It settles the question, How depraved the heart is. It has been doubted whether the heart be totally depraved, and whether the character of God might not be so exhibited that it would love him without being regenerated.

But when the gospel is brought thus nigh, and falls upon the ear, and passes through the understanding, and presses upon the conscience, and is held there for a time, then it is that a man sees what he is, and others see what he is; and that important question is settled, that men have spoken and done evil things as they could.

In the meantime, we learn—

2. Whether all men are *equally depraved*. It has been acknow-

ledged that *some men are totally depraved*, but has been denied that *all are so*. It has been asserted that some only need to be subjected to the bleaching influence of the gospel to be made white again.

But here the question is for ever settled, for the mildest of men, and even females of lovely character, have needed the same powerful regeneration to make them new creatures, and bring them to duty, holiness, and heaven. And in many of our revivals of religion, we can find cases in which individuals of the mildest temperament have been waked up to a kind of madness, by the convicting influence of the Holy Ghost, until their friends have even been afraid to enter their apartments while they were raving under this full blaze of Gospel light, as one would loathe to enter a den mad wolves. Thus the question is settled, that however mild and amiable a man may be by nature, he needs the same renovating influence of the Holy Spirit to make him a new creature.

Another very important question is now settled—

3. That God must change the heart, and that it cannot be done by the influence of mere moral suasion. For all kinds of means have been used, and motives presented to the sinner without effect, till the time came when God would make him willing in the day of his power. But it seems easy when God undertakes, for although he seems to draw the sinner as if he would not come, he seems now to run as if he had not been drawn.

Another question is now settled—

4. That God is sincere in offering mercy. That has always been more or less doubted by the sinner, till at last the question is settled, that as soon as he is made willing, he becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. Old things are passed away, and all things become new.

No. V.

EZEKIEL XXXIII. 11.

Why will ye die ?

THE doctrine of this text seems to be, that man is bent on his own destruction ; that he is determined on a course of sin, which, according to his own conviction, must end in his everlasting ruin.

We may premise on this subject, that the death here intended, cannot mean *natural* death ; for to this men are averse by nature. No man will die till he must. All that a man has will he give for his life. Nor can it mean *spiritual* death ; for all men love to be spiritually dead. Nor would God ask the question respecting this death.

It must therefore mean *eternal* death. It is strange that such a sentence as this should ever have dropped from the lips of the Savior ; for the doctrine means to imply, that man has entered upon a course that must end in his everlasting ruin, and this knowingly and designedly, for,

I. Men break the law of God, knowing that the penalty of breaking this law is their everlasting ruin. If a man should pass through the streets, plunging a dagger into the heart of every one he met with, if we had evidence that he had his reason, we should say that he meant to tempt the law to do its best for his destruction. Nor would men say that we reasoned hardly on this subject. Death would lie so immediately in the train of his misdeeds, that it would seem impossible that any mind should disassociate them. We should all look forward with horror to the day of his execution, and say that he approaches that period as certainly as any one thing can follow another.

II. We should say the same truth is manifest from the fact that sinners reject Jesus Christ, the only medium of their pardon and their salvation. If one had broken the law of man, and should refuse to receive pardon from the hands of his chief magistrate, although he should go daily to his prison, and offer that pardon, and solicit his acceptance, we should say that he intends to die. If the conditions were that he should receive that pardon at the

hands of the chief magistrate, with due acknowledgments, and without any necessary degradation, we should say that he not only intends, but deserves to die.

III. From other facts, it is evident that sinners are determined to die, inasmuch as they reject the influences of the Holy Ghost, the only power that can make them clean, and take their feet out of the horrible pit and miry clay, and set them upon a rock. If one had fallen into a deep cavern, and there was but one ear that could hear, and but one arm that could save, and he should refuse to be aided by that arm, we should say that he certainly means his own destruction.

IV. The same truth is evident from the fact that men are going on to form a character for perdition, when they know that a totally different character is requisite to fit them for heaven.

Now what man is not convinced that the wicked are forming such a character, and thus courting such a destiny? To hope that they may be congregated with the blessed in heaven, while yet they are making rapid strides towards perdition, and drawing sin with cords of vanity and iniquity, as it were with a cart rope, is to exhibit an absurdity that belongs only to the wayward and the lost. Their whole character contains a high promise of the blackness of darkness for ever.

I proceed to the second inquiry, why will ye die? There must be some secret reason why men pursue a course like this. Perhaps the preacher may have permission to look into the matter, and know what these reasons are; and to help you to judge whether they will stand the test at the last day, I

REMARK,

1. Will it prove you *brave* to dare the Eternal to his face?—to rush upon the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler, and browbeat the sacred and terrible anathemas of the whole law and the whole gospel? Would a man rush into the mouth of a cannon or leap into the crater of Vesuvius, to show himself brave? Would he not thus evince himself a natural fool?

2. Will it prove you *wise* to place so small a value upon the soul, and expose it to endless ruin? Would it not place you too by the side of him who sold all the honors of his birthright for a mess of pottage? To thus forfeit your seat in heaven, and your part in the song of redeeming grace which will be sung eternally in heaven, will it prove you wise at whatever price you do it?

3. Let me inquire whether it will prove you good? O, can a good being place so little value upon the glory of the Eternal, and put so low a value upon the blood of Christ! Then let it not be told in Gath, nor published in the streets of Askelon! How dreadful will it prove that sinners have heard such a gospel! Will not the shade of every Sabbath, and the remembered offer of mercy, prick up your conscience to everlasting recollection, and pain, and misery, at the remembrance of all this? Will this not rush upon the stillness and darkness of the pit, like the ghosts of night, and haunt your soul for ever with painful and corroding recollections? Other beings as well as you will have a great interest in your future reputation, and the bliss that shall hang upon that reputation, through everlasting ages. You ought to know, that when your character shall be developed in the last day, it should be such as not to shame your parentage, and oblige them to hide in a corner, while you pass in review before assembled worlds. I remember to have been very much affected, when the British Government began to banish their convicts to the island of New Holland, with the fact that they were ashamed to carry with them the same name in which they had committed their felonies, and done the deed, that put them out of the civilized world for ever. Hence they universally changed their names, that they might, if possible, not suffer under the same name they had borne before. O, how dreadful, that we should thus oblige ourselves and our friends to change our names, in which we committed our crimes, and fell under the condemnation of the law! Will it not stand out to view for ever, that the very name is tainted under which we committed our outrages against the law and the gospel, and made it a curse that we would gladly be rid of? Why, devils will be ashamed of you, when they shall know that you were brought up to all this mercy, and then sunk to this marked degradation in the caverns of despair!

No. VI.

FOR THE MONTHLY CONCERT.

PSALM L. 21.

Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.

IN the form that men give their idols, they show what should be the character of the Supreme God, if they might shape him to their own likeness. The thing that God here complains of is this, that his creatures *would* think him just such an one as themselves. But he assures them that he would set their sin in this matter before their eyes, and teach them to judge more correctly, and value more highly their Supreme Deity. The attributes with which they invest him, are the attributes with which they would invest the object of their supreme worship, if he would shape himself to their image. If they have given him angels' form, they would exalt him to the rank of angels. And if mere human being, they would invest him only with human intelligence. If, on the other hand, they have given their idol the form of a beast that eateth grass; if they have made him an ox or a calf, or if they have made him a serpent or a reptile, this shows that they would confer upon the object of their devotion no intelligence. And to go one step further, if they have given him the form of a Satan, we thus descry that they would have their God sunk to a level with this grade of being. And if they have thrown off all reserve, and made him a devil, how natural is it to suppose that they would shape the God they now worship "to the Prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, among whom we all had our conversation in times past, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and being by nature children of wrath, even as others." Thus men will ever shape their god to their liking; and if we can discover what errors the heathen have made on this subject, we can know precisely what would be the shape of the deity they would place upon the throne. And

I. We know that they have excluded God from his own world. They are uniformly idolaters, in every kingdom and nation found under the heavens. If one nation could have been found that

were worshipers of the true God, we should have doubted whether they had not escaped the fall.

II. We should gather from their story, as far as it has reached our ear, that the gods they worship are a set of senseless beings—mere wood and stone. We have collected some of their gods from heathen territory, who are as uncouth and unsightly and disproportioned a set of senseless beings as the human mind can conceive of. We know they have worshiped mere leeks and onions, and the crocodile of the Nile has long been an object of supreme adoration. “They made a calf in Horeb, and worshiped the molten image.”

III. When they did give their gods any moral intelligence at all, they made them debauched and profligate to the last degree. They had their revels and cabals in their factious heaven. On one occasion, I remember, one of their gods is famed to have been thrown to the earth, and to have employed his time afterwards, in forging thunderbolts for Jupiter. Now what could we expect of a people who would thus degrade their supreme deities, and render them altogether such beings as themselves, entering into folly, lust, and drunkenness, and every species of crime ?

IV. They went *still further*, and made them devils. There are a number of the African tribes who worship the very devil himself. Thus the supreme object of their worship is the very spirit that now “worketh in the children of disobedience.”

REMARKS.

1. Shall we not pity a race of beings so deluded and spoiled and ensnared by their own philosophy ?

2. Shall we esteem any sacrifices too great to be made, if we can buy them off from such delusion, and cause them to look upward, and lay hold on eternal life ?

3. Should the business of building a world loom up before us with more mightiness of enterprise than the redemption of a world, already built, from the deadly plagues of sin ? I would not fly as swiftly, nor labor as industriously to extinguish the flames of a burning world, as to rescue from a calamity so much more disastrous to the heathen millions that are going down in one unbroken mass to the blackness of darkness for ever. I would not cry as loudly to wake up a sleeping village to danger of being swept

away by a stream of lava, at the foot a glowing Etna, or a laboring Vesuvius.

4. Will not the pious youth have their farms sold, and pawn their merchandise, that promised them merely temporal blessings, that they may enter upon a mightier enterprise of rescuing from the slavery of sin a world that has ruined itself?

No. VII.

JEREMIAH VIII. 22.

Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

A PENSIVE and distressed father, that had just left the sick bed of a beloved daughter, and was wandering through the streets in all the dejection of grief, and all the solitude which is not easily thrown off, in the hour of her agony, may easily be supposed to have uttered himself in the language of the text.

And if we may suppose that she had been long subjected to the want of a physician and a nurse, while death must now ensue as a consequence of that neglect, while there *was* a remedy at hand, and a physician hard by; but there was none at hand to call in that physician, or to apply that balm, by the application of which she might have been restored to health, joy, and life.

One would grieve to hear the solitary moan of such a father, and haste to know if it is altogether too late to call in the kind and timely physician.

It is probably true that Gilead abounded with a balm that, in a great many cases, proved a sovereign remedy to some diseases that prevailed in Jerusalem, called here, and elsewhere, the daughter of Zion. Here, it may be, is asked a question which has relation to the whole human family, and bearing upon the natural disease of the soul, and is equivalent to asking, *Are not the means ample and ready for the healing of the plague of sin in the human family? Why then are they not applied, and spiritual health universally recovered?*

Of course, the subject divides itself into two heads. I shall be led to speak first of the disease, and then of the remedy.

I. In the first place, I would say of the disease, that it is one of universal application.

There has been no nation found that is not totally depraved. They all practised a gross and God-provoking idolatry. They made their idols as stupid and as devilish as they could, practising as gross a perversion of their Supreme Deity as possible, and then they practised upon man all the outrages that a perverted intellect could contrive. The false religion of the world was a bloody, and adulterous, and cruel, and faithless, and imposing religion, in all its acts.

I now intend the very highest charge that can be brought against the human family, equivalent to that charge brought against us by Him who knows well what is in man—"Thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldest."

II. This disease is, of all others, the most contagious. It has been communicated through the wide world, and gone into every little ramification of every kingdom under the whole heaven.

When we find a nation that we have never known before, we find them universally infected with the pillage of sin. Hence, "from the crown of the head, even unto the feet, they are full of wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores."

The prevailing plague has spread through the human family an amount of misery that cannot be easily calculated. It poisons all the human relations, and mars every human compact; and, first of all, man's covenant with his God. The result of this is, that it has filled and loaded him with misery to the full, and all nature "groans and travails to be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and be brought into the glorious liberty of the sons of God."

Nor can it be hoped that this result, devoutly to be wished for, will ever be accomplished, till Christ shall come the second time "without sin unto salvation," and "the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Here we might expatiate largely upon the miseries of sin, but I pass to the question—

III. Why is not the plague healed? "Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"

In answering this question, I should choose to say,

1. Sinners are not sensible that they are the subjects of this deplorable disease. They say, We "are whole, and have no need

of a physician ;” and “ know not that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” The first object of a preached gospel is to convince them of this fact. They have no experience that can test this question at all. They have never known what health was, having always been in this same deplorable condition ; except that the plague has been gradually becoming worse and worse, till, at length, it has produced a kind of delirium, that has blunted the sensibility of consciousness, and rendered man blind to the spots of the plague that are upon him.

2. If to any extent they are conscious of their condition, they love the very disease that cleaves to them. How then can it be hoped that they will take the least pains to rid themselves of a pestilence that has as yet given them no pain, and they have known no disgrace that has accrued to them from having the plague upon them.

They are not sent to live in a house by themselves, as the children of Israel used to be when they had the leprosy, or as men are now when affected with the plague.

If men are affected with a disposition to do wickedly, it attaches no disgrace to them, not as it will be in the judgment day, not as it is when men become “ ashamed and confounded, and never open their mouths any more, because of their shame, when God becomes pacified towards them for all that they have done.”

3. Another reason that men are not healed is, that they do not love the Physician.

He is to them a “ root out of a dry ground, without form or comeliness.”

It is not to be expected that men will apply to the Savior, however afflicted, till they feel their need of him.

How much pains will parents take to have their children know and love their family physician, lest, when attacked with disease, they should be shy of his approach, and suffer, before they will allow him to come nigh them. But when sinners see the Lord Jesus Christ to be “ chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely,” they rush to his arms, and are rather glad to be sick, that they may employ such a royal physician.

4. They do not love the price at which they can be healed. It must be with Christ a mere gratuitous healing.

Men must come to him without money, and then it will be without price. The sinner must just give himself into the hands of Christ, to be healed in his own way. Which leads me to say,

5. Sinners do not relish the manner of the application. They are ready, say they, as one who came in old times to the prophet of Israel. "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Why may I not wash in them and be clean?" Thus sinners complain of the application.

This deep repentance, and this being healed by faith, destroys all human agency and contrivance, and gives God all the glory.

No. VIII.

ISAIAH II. 22.

Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrills; for wherein is he to be accounted of?

MAN can give no good account of himself, nor can his fellows give a good account of him, nor has his Maker any better account to give of him—"The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." We do not wonder at God's account of him—"Thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldest."

Man is the most unaccountable creature in all the creation of God—absurd in all his movements

I. He is entirely limited in his powers, "is of yesterday, and knows nothing," and yet is a proud and self-sufficient being, who will not yield to be instructed, of even the Lord of hosts.

II. He is a being of so little might, that he is said to be "crushed before the moth," and yet "he lifteth his mouth against the heavens, and his tongue walketh through the earth." "He rushes upon the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler," and impudently inquires, "Who is the Lord, that I should serve him?"

III. He is the only *accountable creature*, and the only *careless one*. He knows that he must stand before the bar of God, and be judged for all the deeds done here in the body, and yet is heard to say, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

IV. He is the only *reasoning creature*, and the yet only one that acts *unreasonably*. He can look at the face of the sky and know the signs of the times, and yet permits the dread concerns of eternity to close in upon him, unheeded, in the twinkling of an eye. He is crying, Peace, peace, till the moment when sudden destruction comes upon him, as travail upon a woman with child.

V. He is the only probationer for eternity, and yet the only being prodigal of time. He only needs, and has invented pastimes—things to kill time. And yet when he is considered in connection with the things he is constrained to contemplate, time is to him eternity.

VI. He only is capable of looking at the heavens, and has received from them mercies innumerable, “new every morning, and fresh every evening,” and yet he is the only being of all the creatures of God who is unthankful. He only is proud of what enslaves and degrades him. He only is vain of what is loaned him, covetous of what is not his own, and what he must quit so soon.

REMARKS.

1. How evidently is man in a state of pain; had his soul retained moral health, he would not have been liable to all this absurdity of moral movement.

2. How lamentably slow is the work of renovation seen to be going on in the believer! When will he ever be what God would have him to be?

3. How mad are men to suppose that any thing, less than regeneration, can make man a correct being.

4. How mad is man who trusteth in his own heart. The scriptures pronounce him a fool.

If men may put no confidence in one another, they put none in themselves. Man may be deceived and ruined while he thinks he has a sure guide.

No. IX.

HEBREWS X. 31.

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

WHY will it be so fearful a thing to fall into the hands of the living God?

Not because he is not the kindest being in the universe, and too just to do wrong to any being. "He is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in goodness and truth."

But the text does not mean to say, that sinners are not *now* in the hands of the living God, but has allusion to the time when he will make them the subjects of his vindictive wrath; when he will display his hatred of their character in their everlasting destruction.

Why will it be so fearful a thing to fall into the hands of the living God?

I. Because he suffers his wrath to *accumulate*.

Men inflict vengeance as soon as they begin to be angry. They punish when their "wrath is kindled but a little," perhaps when but one act of aggression has been committed.

God waits long. The iniquity of the Canaanites was not yet full. He waited in the old world, after the decree to destroy it had gone out, one hundred and twenty years.

II. Because delays to punish do not at all *neutralize his anger*.

Men sometimes forget the deed that enraged them, and become quite pacified after having been angry, although they have not taken vengeance.

"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

III. Because, while he delays to punish, he continues the means of grace, and thus shows himself willing not to inflict *the deserved wrath*.

"O that thou hadst hearkened unto my commandments, then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea."

IV. While he waits on the sinner, he continues to him the wonted indulgences of his providence. He feeds his enemies while he is waiting the hour of their execution, and he often waits very long.

V. While he waits, he gives no intimation that he *continues angry*.

The sinner would not know by any mere token of divine wrath, that God had marked him out for destruction.

VI. Because he fixes no set bounds to his indulgences.

One he bears with a longer time, another a shorter—condemns one at the age of twenty, another at the age of forty, and another at the age of sixty.

VII. The longer he waits, the less hope there is of forgiveness.

It is otherwise with *men*; if *they* delay vengeance, we hope they have forgotten their wrath—not so with *God*.

VIII. Because he always produces conviction of desert when he punishes.

It is often otherwise with *men*. *They* are sometimes convicted and condemned while innocent.

IX. When *he* punishes, it is always a *final and complete destruction*. Wrath shall come upon them to the uttermost.

X. It will be *jealousy* when *he* punishes, and no wrath is so dreadful. It is the wrath of the *Lamb*. *Jealousy is love soured*.

XI. He is the *living God*!

No idea can be more dreadful. He lives to finish the wrath he began to inflict. He will eternally be alive to punish.

REMARKS.

1. How amazing is the supineness of the sinner, who must so soon fall into the hands of the *living God*!

2. How yet more amazing their mirth and jollity—dancing in their chains!

3. How astonishing the indifference of believers! They would feel serious at the prison grates of some convict that must die a *natural death* as soon as many around them must die eternally.

4. If this subject is so solemn and dreadful in its application to sinners *in general*, how much more dreadful must it be in application to those who have set out for heaven, and then drawn back to perdition! Such will be convicted of having “trodden under foot the Son of God,” in a peculiar and terrible sense, “and put him to an open shame.”

No. X.

GALATIANS IV. 15.

Where is then the blessedness ye spake of?

PAUL had preached the gospel to the Galatians, had been the means of turning many to the Lord Jesus Christ, and drawn toward himself their strong attachment.

If it had been possible, he says, they would have plucked out their own eyes and given to him. But he had now become their enemy because he told them the truth.

But the great calamity was, that while they had become cold in their affections towards their spiritual father, they had also declined in their affections towards Jesus Christ, and there was need that he be formed again in them the hope of glory.

But as no scripture is of private interpretation, the subject will lead me to inquire of believers, "Where is then the blessedness ye spake of?" What cause has there been, and what excuse can be offered, for a decline of Christian affection, since the time of your espousals to the Lord Jesus Christ?

That there has been a decline in the warmth of feeling and promptness of action, since the day of your covenant with God, it is presumed no one will require us to prove.

The only inquiry that must be made, is into the cause or ground of this decline.

I. Is not Jehovah the same great and good being he was when you gave him your whole heart, and covenanted to be his for ever? And does he not govern the world on the same principles of grace and mercy by Jesus Christ? And does he not foster the church with the same care and kindness he did when you first took sanctuary in her bowers? Has there been any correspondent cooling of affection in the bosom of the angels, and the "spirits of just men made perfect," towards Jehovah? Is he not as nigh to you, and as necessary, as when you first discovered that the world was full of God? "Should you ascend up to heaven, is he not there? Should you make your bed in hell, is he not there? Is not his favor life, and his loving kindness better than life?" If plunged into trials, are you not still obliged to say, "The Lord

liveth, and the Lord reigneth, blessed be the name of the Lord" ? Will you not say, " Whom have I in heaven but thee, and who is there on earth I desire beside thee ?" Would you not say in the hour of onset, " If it had not been for the Lord who was on our side when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quickly, when their wrath was kindled against us." Why, then, any change in your affection towards the great God ? " Where is then the blessedness ye spake of ?"

II. And what grand change has there been in your views or affections towards the Lord Jesus Christ ? It is as true now, as then, that he died for you, and still intercedes for you. His blood is still the basis of your pardon and the ground of your acceptance ; and your hope and communion with him is as sweet as ever. The redeemed in heaven have none of them lost their confidence in him. You did not, in the time of your espousals, overrate his merits, or value too highly his love, or confide too firmly in the sureties of the everlasting covenant. Why, then, any change in your affections towards the Lord Jesus Christ ? " Where then is the blessedness ye spake of ?"

III. And the children of God, to whom you seemed so much attached, have the same claim to your regard as they had then. True, you might not then have seen all the faults in them you now see. But have you seen so many that you cannot love them ? If so, then we ask if Christ has seen so many that *he* cannot love them ? And cannot you love when *he* can ? Have you not as much in you to cool their affection as they to cool yours ? And, with all their faults, are they not in covenant with God ? Will they not finally escape to heaven ? You once loved them because they loved Christ, and they love him still, and he them. Where, then, has fled that warm Christian affection which led you to say, with the Moabites, " Where thou goest, I will go, and where thou stayest I will stay !"

IV. The souls of ungodly men, that claimed your pity, and draw forth your prayers and exhortations and entreaties, are worth no less now, than at the time of your espousals to the Lord Jesus Christ. Those same beings are some of them here yet, in all their unbelief and impenitence, and their condition, it will be acknowledged, is far more deplorable. If many are gone and lost who affected your hearts in the day when you believed, others are here, in the same ruined condition of guilt and wretchedness. Hence, why any less concern for their souls ?

V. And this poor world is the same vanity as when you first

trampled it under your feet. In what new attitude can it possibly have presented itself so as to win again a supreme attachment? It is a perishing good that can be stolen or moth-eaten, or can take wings and fly away. The cry in your ear still is, "Arise ye, and depart, for this is not your rest. Or has this cry all died away? Well, it is as true as when you first listened to it. This is a poor world, a temptation, a *mere vanity*.

VI. And the heavenly treasure—how can it have lost its value to a dying man? However highly it may be right to value this world, we must quit it so soon, that wisdom would dictate that we have treasures elsewhere. If heaven implies a freedom from sin, how can the believer not long for it? If in heaven there are more distinct views of Christ than in this life, how can the believer not wish to be in heaven?

VIII. Some of the blessedness of your earliest religious hours consists in the happy seasons of prayer enjoyed; and why has this duty lost any of its sweetness? God is as ready to hear you pray, and as prompt to answer and save, as he then was; and have you not the same occasion to pray? Do not a thousand cares ever press you into a cold, backslidden state? And could you get back to the views and affections you once had, the duty would give you all the pleasure it then did. "Where is then the blessedness ye spake of?"

VIII. And so far as your early joys were derived from the Bible, why need there have been any change? It is the same book of God, filled with the same precious promises, the same sanctifying doctrines, and the same delightful exhibition of God and heaven. "Where is then the blessedness ye spake of?"

REMARKS.

It may be important to inquire, since there would seem to be no cause of the change, of the loss of blessedness to believers from their departure from the spirit of their espousals, what the effect will be?

1. That the believer is greatly injuring his own soul by his departure, there can be no doubt. He backens his heavenly growth.

2. It is equally sure that he injures his brethren. He holds them back with all the influence he has over them, by all the affection they have for him, and all the forms of his example.

3. And in the mean time he is destroying the world of the ungodly. They will not believe, while they see you live as though

you were sorry you had made a profession of religion, that there can be any great sweetness or richness in that religion.

4. He is preparing himself, *probably*, for a wretched dying bed.
5. He will have a lower seat in heaven.

No. XI.

PSALM XLV. 10, 11.

Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house: so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty, for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him.

To render the text applicable to the present occasion, it needs only to be said, that it constitutes a fragment of a beautiful allegory, in which the union of Christ with his people is represented, under the allusion of a marriage. It is hardly necessary to spend a moment in tracing the features of the allegory. The intended bride is expected to listen to the terms of the compact and well consider it, and then to forget her people and her father's house. Her beloved then promises to take delight in her spiritual beauty, and as her Lord, receive her subjection and homage.

The different features of the allegory will furnish the plan of my remarks.

I. The Lord Jesus has made to you kind and gracious overtures. He offers to unite you to himself in an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things, and sure. Thus in a parallel passage, he uses the same figure: "I will betroth thee unto me for ever. Yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies—I will betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord." For a consummation of this marriage union between Christ and believers, see Rev. xix. 7, 8. "Christ will furnish you with your marriage apparel and ornaments, so that when adorned for the wedding, you will wear his own beauties." See Is. lxi. 10. We see this circumstance noticed in the history of his ancient Church—"Thy renown went forth among the heathen, for thy beauty, for it was perfect, through my comeliness which I had put upon thee."

Under the gospel dispensation—sobriety, gravity, and temperance, a meek and a quiet spirit, are the ornaments the soul is expected to wear, which becomes wedded to the Lord Jesus Christ.

When he has thus made you beautiful, he will love his own image, which he has put upon you, and he will employ you in his service, and will hold you near him, blessing you with his smiles for ever.

II. The Lord Jesus Christ expects that you will hearken and incline your ear. He deals with sinners as rational, intelligent beings, and makes overtures, in language which they understand. The Bible is the plainest book in the world, and the gospel system so plain, that "the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein." You must not, however, suppose that in securing your assent to the terms of the covenant, the Holy Spirit deals with you as if you were machines—mere passive recipients of his mercy. No: he does not thus hold out a premium for stupidity and inaction. If you would be saved, you must hearken and incline your ear, and consider when Christ speaks. You must do as David did. "I thought upon my ways; I turned my feet unto thy testimonies; I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments." Ps. cxix. 59, 60. Mere hearing, without consideration, will not profit you: as says James, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

III. You are required to forget your own people and your father's house. As in marriage, the bride separates herself from her home, so the sinner must disengage himself from every friend, however dear, who would hold him back in the service of Christ. It often happens, that under these circumstances, "a man's foes are they of his own household." Yet, says the Savior, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me is not worthy of me." You must consequently divorce yourself from all your gay, idle, fashionable, and irreligious companions. There is no alternative but abandonment. The word of God is explicit: "And when he had called the people unto him, with his disciples

a so, he said unto them, whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

IV. When you have equipped yourself for a spiritual union with Christ, he will see in you those beauties that will render you his delight and his glory. They will be his own beauties put upon you, but put upon you so as to be your own.

1. They will adhere to you for ever.

2. They will shine by contrast with your former character. You know how pleasing a thing it is to see what was once deformed made beautiful.

3. They will never tarnish. They do not consist in tinsel, or in jewels which grow old and fade. They do not depend, like the cheek and the sprightliness of youth, on the rapid flow of the life's blood. They do not depend upon the caprices of fashion or custom.

4. They will be beauties which will grow brighter, and shine with more and more brilliancy and glory through all the years of heaven. A full view of the glories of the Lamb will make every face in heaven glow with increasing loveliness for ever.

V. It remains that I speak of your employment in the spiritual house of your Lord. He is thy Lord, and I worship thou him.

You are to be employed everlastingly in doing him service—in vindicating his honor and law and government—in contriving new anthems to express your pleasure and confidence and devotion—in urging on the angels to louder and sweeter hosannas—in holding on upon the everlasting covenant. Come, my fellow-sinners, will you be wedded to the Lord Jesus? What do you reply? Do you ask me, shall we not tire in the work? No. Jesus will appear more and more lovely for ever.

But will not the world laugh at me? Let them laugh. Can it interrupt your bliss in heaven? But should you, for fear of the world's ridicule refuse? Can their laughter relieve the agonies

of your dying bed, or extinguish the flames of hell, when you are sinking amidst them ?

Do you say, I am too young, and religion will make me unlovely ? Oh, no. The rose on the cheek of beauty was never half so beautiful or fragrant as when bathed in the tears of repentance, or blushing with the first tints of hope.

“And now if you will deal kindly and truly with my Master, tell me, and if not tell me, that I may turn to the right hand or the left.” Gen. xxiv. 49.

No. XII.

JEREMIAH III. 15.

I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

THE prophet is addressing the ten tribes, and promises, in the name of God, that if they will return to him by repentance, he will give them pastors after his own heart, through whose agency he will edify and save them.

But the church is in all ages the same, and what was the richest promise to Israel is the richest that God can now make to his people.

It can then need no apology, if I make it my object on this occasion to MAGNIFY the pastoral office.

I would premise, that the pastoral office seems the only ministerial office intended to be permanent.

I. What, then, are the duties of the pastoral office ?

1. To edify the body of Christ ; to mature the Christians for their heavenly state.

The idea is a mistaken one, that the conversion of sinners is a more pressing object than the edification of the Church. God has promised them that he will guide them with his counsel, and afterward receive them to glory.

He has promised his Son, I know, that he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied ; and this promise the Father will fulfil. But the pastoral office has primary reference to the flock that is to be fed. This flock, I know, must be constantly replenished

from the world. "Other sheep have I, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring in, that there may be one fold and one shepherd." Hence, while these other sheep are to be gathered in, and gathered through a preached gospel—for by the foolishness of preaching God will save them that believe—it is still true that God has associated with the permanency of the Church, a permanent pastoral office. We might divide the duties of the office into more or less. I should choose to say that the pastor must *lead*, and *feed*, and *guard*, and *heal*.

1. He must *lead*. A pastor may not be ignorant of the leading doctrines of the gospel, and must make plain to the Church the truths she may believe, and the precepts she must practice, to please her Lord.

2. He must *feed* them. The business of feeding the flock of God, over which a bishop is made the overseer, consists very much in so presenting divine truth to the Church as to draw out the holy affections of the heart, and lead on, to a perfect conformity to the will of God, and to the image of Jesus Christ, his sacramental multitude. They must promptly hear the shepherd's voice, when there is any danger that they may stray.

3. He must *guard*. To guard the flock, implies on the part of the pastor a constant vigilance, that shall espy every approaching danger, and every foe that may lurk in ambush to destroy or injure any interest of the Church.

4. To *heal*, embraces those arduous and difficult duties that grow out of the errors and the general depravity of the people of God.

All these are implied in edifying the Church of the living God; and the whole is to be done, as far as human agency is concerned, through the skilful use of God's truth. God's people are spoken of as built up in the most holy faith. They are said to be rooted and grounded in the truth. And the promise is, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

No other means than truth will effectually move the Christians on any point, when we wish them to put forth their energies. A song will not do it, nor a prayer. A healthful and continued action requires solid food.

We can easily see how truth, in the hands of the Holy Ghost, must do the whole work. If he becomes idolatrous—truth shows him God, shining in the face of Jesus Christ. If proud—truth shows him the rock whence he was hewn, and the hole of the pit whence he was digged. If he cease to care for sinners—truth shows him the terrors of the Lord: he learns the sinner's end in

the sanctuary of the Most High. If he becomes worldly, or lustful, or envious, or ambitious, or sluggish—on each and every of these points he must be assailed and put right by the law of the Lord, which is perfect, converting the soul.

And the power that brings the wanderer back, must hold him. “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold with thy free spirit; then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.” Not only now, but in heaven, the truth, and the Spirit through the truth, must keep him holding on for ever.

But not cold, speculative or philosophical truth will do this. We have no such in the Bible. It is spiritual, and practical, and experimental truth, that renovates the heart. When David, in the dark hour, encouraged himself in the Lord his God, it was not by a cold, philosophical speculation on the attributes of God; but some practical review of the Divine operations—how God interposed for Abraham, and Jacob, and Moses, and Joshua.

II. Having thus inquired respecting the duties of the pastoral office, and shown that its office is to guide the Church to heaven, *let us now inquire whether the Church can safely dispense with this office?* Why may not evangelists, the only proposed substitute, serve all her interests, and protect her honor, and guide her to the marriage supper? I take the negative of this question, for the following reasons:

1. Evangelists cannot feel the pastoral affections. Their home is the Church at large; and their regards to the Church can have no more locality than their persons.

2. Evangelists cannot have the leisure to study extensively the word of God. They cannot give themselves to reading, and become mighty in the Scriptures. They may gain a kind of knowledge that will render them invaluable ministers of the word of life, and take lessons extensively on human manners and human nature.

3. They cannot become familiar with the business of administering the discipline of the Church, and know how to meet the cases of toil and sorrow which so frequently rend piecemeal the churches of Jesus Christ.

4. They cannot feel the *responsibilities* that are indispensable to the guidance and safe conduct of the churches through this wilderness. Must all matters in the Church of Christ be done accord-

ing to his own laws? they must be done by the men who will remain on the spot to bear the blame if they are done wrong.

5. It is doubtful whether the churches will hold in sufficiently high respect and affection, for their own good, a changing and fluctuating ministry. If there is no portion of the parental relation, there can be but little of that filial respect that begets confidence, and tractableness, and the desirable trust and submission.

OBJECTIONS.

1. But it has been said, that the pastoral relation has cradled the Church to sleep; and some wise men have believed that, to unsettle the ministry, and supply the place of the pastors with evangelists, is the remedy.

This, it would seem, is being wise above what is written. God has appointed the office, and could not but know perfectly whether his churches would be safe under his own regulations. As well might we say that none are so unfit to bring up children as their parents, and discard at once all the domestic relations.

2. But a perpetual change in the ministry will furnish the churches a perpetual novelty in the mode of exhibiting the word of life. This is by no means certain—and if certain, not certainly a good.

3. But if we thus hold the lash over ministers, we shall press them up to duty, and make them more faithful. Perhaps not. They may be rendered mercenary; and be driven, some of them, to hypocrisy, by the want of a pice of bread; but will not, we apprehend, be rendered, by this means, more faithful to Jesus Christ or to his flock.

REMARKS.

1. Let, then, the churches love their pastors, and tenderly cherish them, and pray for them.

2. Let the pastors care supremely for the eternal salvation of their people, that the high and holy office may result in the presenting to Christ, at last, a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

3. How dreadful this office, to negotiate between God and man, as God's ambassador!

Too dreadful to be lightly entered upon.

Too dreadful to be entered unprepared.

Too dreadful to be coveted.

And yet, too honorable to be avoided, when the call is plain.

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.”

No. XIII.

I PETER IV. 18.

If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

ON the truth of God we found a hope that his people will all reach heaven, not to shine with equal light, and not to glow with equal transport in the throne of the blessed. Some of God's people will shine with full-orbed glory, while others will shine with the diminished light of a more distant star. It is promised to the people of God that those who have turned many to righteousness, shall shine in the kingdom of their Father, and as the stars, for ever and ever; and yet the smallest amount of that exalted glory will surpass the highest hopes of every humble believer. His expectation is, he shall be “saved, as though by fire.” He is a brand plucked out of the fire, and if he may reach heaven, at any price, it is the height of his ambition. If he may only stand at the portals of that happy world, and gaze for ever upon one of the glories of that cluster to the name of Jesus, and study out that one rich attribute of the Savior, it will be heaven enough for him; and yet his hope is to reach that “far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” when he dares to entertain any hope at all. The fact is, a great deal must be done yet for the people of God to bring them to heaven. But this will be done by the Holy Ghost, “who hath taken their feet out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, and put a new song into their mouth.” This first gift of a Savior promises all the rest, “He that spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all, how shall he not freely give us all things with him?”

But let us look a little at the process of this work.

I. The people of God will be saved with difficulty.

1. Owing to their strong remaining corruptions. These must

all be subdued by the power of God, or they can never live in heaven. If the work of God is begun in their hearts, it is only the first dawns of eternal light, which will "shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day." So the promise is.

2. To their long and inveterate habits of sin. It may be said of them, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye, who are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well."

3. To the strong and numerous foes that oppose his march. The Christian, it seems, is destined to be watched and waylaid in every furlong of his route. If finally he can sing, "The desert is all trodden over; not another foe to waylay, not another serpent to bite, or stony morass to cross," with this song he hopes to finish his pilgrimage.

4. A great amount of labor will be requisite to push him forward in his heavenly pilgrimage.

5. There will await him many other dangers, of which he can have yet no conception. He has yet to "wrestle with principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world, with spiritual wickedness in high places," and will need yet the agility of an angel, to ward off his danger and consummate the victory.

II. But "where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?" All the difficulties, and more yet, that obstruct the way of the Christian heavenward, are surely before the man who has not commenced his route thither.

1. The man who is not a Christian has yet to enter upon the way. He has yet to combat the very preliminaries of the journey; and he has yet to suppose they may be even greater than those in the way of the Christian.

2. He may have more yet corruptions. He may have taken a more wayward course, and may have engendered iniquities. His habits of sin may have placed him further from heaven than the believer, and he may have yet many furlongs to go before he reaches the spot where the Christian began his route.

3. But his iniquities must all be uprooted. He has been sowing the very ground he has trodden over with thorns and briars; and there, with his own hand, he must pluck up and plant, instead of them, the rose of Sharon.

4. He has more foes, in addition to those planted in the way of the Christian. With these he must wrestle and strive more; with these he must make a great many efforts, before he will reach the spot from whence the Christian has passed on towards heaven.

5. He must do more labor than if he had set out earlier.
6. The same, and more yet dangers await him than await the Christian.

REMARKS.

1. Would I have the sinner despair, lie down and die? Will not heaven be worth all the efforts he has yet to make, and to avoid hell? Would it not be worth while that he should go through again and again, if it must be, all the pangs of the new birth?

I have heard of three men that were cast upon an island, having no way to live but to wrestle perpetually all night. It was a terrible atmosphere, and the bay was freezing over, and they must stay and wrestle the livelong night, or life must go out by frost. They continued to struggle the next day for life, until the ice bore them, and they went on shore and lived. Now was it not best that they should do all this and live, rather than die?

2. O, then, how anxious should sinners be to commence the great work of their salvation!

3. How anxious, too, should the church be that sinners might live!

No. XIV.

GENESIS XXVIII. 20—22.

And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: And this stone which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

I HAVE thought for some time it might be peculiarly interesting, if ministers would be in the habit of drawing out the characters of Old Testament saints, through the times and scenes of their conversion, fixing on the time if *might be*, when they gave up all for Christ, and submitted themselves to the rule and direction of Heaven. I know there might be much said that would be wild and erratic, as in the case of a late writer, who represented David as impenitent up to the time of his illicit intercourse with the wife of Uriah, throwing very great confusion into the history of "that man after God's own heart." I have supposed a careful examination would enable them to do so with a great amount of accuracy.

Thus the character of the Christian in one generation might be drawn out to the gaze and review of another generation, and thus, as generation after generation should come home to heaven, the believers of one dispensation might gaze upon the full orb'd glory of the Christians of another generation, until they should all come home to "the same far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," and thus appear in one united company before the Lamb, where they join to "ascribe to him power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." I know if we should attempt to fix with precision the exact time when a new heart, and a right spirit were given to them, we might be liable to many gross blunders. But still we might elicit by this many interesting thoughts, and be able better to compare the genius and the spirit of the different ages and dispensations, and thus urge on the whole Sacramental host to holy discipline and heavenly soldiery, till we might come where we should see the King in his beauty.

Here we would plant the feet of the Patriarch, and inquire whether this is or *is not* the very spot where he was born again by the Spirit of God, and where commenced that wondrous train of dispensations that ended in his final equipment for glory.

For the following reasons we are of this opinion:—

1. It seems to have been the time he first met with God, and first made a vow to God.

2. This seems to have been a time of peculiar affliction and of peculiar cause to review his life.

3. In the vision of the night he had a very clear demonstration of the Divine care over him in the angels that ascended and descended the ladder, and especially in the exhibition of the Lord of Angels that appeared at the top of the ladder.

4. The fact that then for the first time was awakened against him the inveterate wrath of his brother Esau, which continued to the day that he met him at Penuel, where he wrestled with God. It seems to have been the moment, for the first time, that he came under the wing of the everlasting covenant, "which is well ordered in all things and sure."

5. This seems to have been the first time that he awoke up to the duty of paying his vows.

6. This seems to have been the moment when there was appointed a guard of angels over him to keep him in the way that he went.

7. This seems to have been the time when there commenced

between him and God a train of Divine communications, in which God "led him by his counsel, and gave evidence that he would afterward receive him to glory."

8. It seems to have been the time when he was taken under the Divine escort for heaven, to which he seems to have very tenderly referred, when he said to Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage."

From this time forward he seems to have acted as one acquainted with God, and seems at all times to care supremely for his honor. This seems to have been the moment *when* "his sin had found him out," and when he was driven from his kindred and friends, and constrained to pass through those trials, which, through the sanctifying influence of the Spirit, were calculated to ripen him for glory.

REMARKS.

1. It was remarked by one of the old fathers, that he that will observe the wonderful events of Divine providence, shall have wonderful events of Divine providence *to observe*.

2. To him who will so converse about God in his history, as to make God great, God will so manage in his providence as to make him great.

Thus what he *gives* us we *gather*. Thus "they that honor God, he will honor."

3. How rich and instructive is it to be conversant with the ancient believers, with the kings and princes of antiquity, the patriarchs, and prophets, and elders of a former Church. It is like walking among the ruins of some rich temple, and marking the stately columns and ornaments of an ancient city, and observing the splendid contour of what excited the wonder, and drew forth the admiration of past generations. Thus would the subject I propose make us ever familiar, and hold us conversant with objects the most truly sublime.

No. XV.

MATTHEW XXII. 36, 37, 38.

Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, this is the first, and great commandment.

I. To love the Lord our God with all our heart is the first and great commandment, because in him are found those excellences which deserve our highest esteem. They are moral beauties. They render God lovely to himself, and all his creatures lovely to one another. Thus there is let down, as with a golden chain, one grand affection, that binds, or would bind together the whole human family. But depravity has sundered that chain—has snapped that ligature.

II. Because in him is found nothing to allay, or neutralize those holy affections.

III. Because our highest blessedness consists in putting forth the affections required in this commandment.

IV. Because, when the heart returns supreme affection towards its Maker, then it is restored from the most direful alienation that ever happened under the government of God. The alienation that occurred in heaven when there was revolt among the angels, did not effect more broadly the sum of human blessedness, did not sunder a tie more sacred.

V. Because the example of all holy beings in every world that God has built, conspires to enforce this law. There would be no being but God to complain, and he will not, if we give him our supreme affection, if we love him while we live, if we love him when we die, if we love him when we are dead.

REMARKS.

1. The subject shows us the grand defect in the morality of all unregenerate men. They have no supreme object of affection, or at least God is not that object, it is some creature, some vanity of vanities, which cannot afford them any real or permanent enjoyment.

2. We see why it is impossible for unregenerate men to live in heaven.

None can live there who do not make God the object of their concentrated affections.

Discord would prevail in heaven should men be indiscriminately received into that world.

3. Hence the necessity of a separation in the coming world according to character. The *tares* and the *wheat*, the *sheep* and the *goats*, the *clean* and the *unclean*, are terms expressive of the contrariety of character on which this final division will be founded.

4. We see, then, how radical is this change required in regeneration, as great as if the lion should become a lamb, or the vulture should be changed into a dove. It is a change in the object of the supreme affections.

5. We see why unregenerate men are unhappy and must be so. They must dislodge their hearts from its hold upon the world and all that they hold dear; we are required to "put off concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of our mind; and that" we "put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Children are commanded to love their parents, and parents their children; husbands their wives, and wives their husbands, and in fine we are commanded to love all men "with a pure heart fervently," and to let "love be without dissimulation." That is, the affection we are to feel is to be a sincere, and cordial, and true affection. But in all this there is to be no infringement at all, upon the claims of God. He claims a supreme affection, and all our other affections are to be in subordination to this.

Hence, whatever I set out to love, I engage with the principle that God is to be loved better.

No. XVI.

PSALM CII. 1.

Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto thee.

ONE of the most natural things for a creature, is to know how he may approach acceptably his Maker. Hence that supplication so often in the mouth of God's people, "Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord?"

To point out such a prayer, and to show what will be that mode of approach that will draw down blessings upon our heads, will be my object.

I. There must be a holy respect for the character and ways of God. This will prevent us from coming into his presence "as the horse rusheth into the battle," and prevent us from being repulsed at the first attempt, as offering him what is a stench and a nuisance in his sight, instead of an acceptable sacrifice.

When we would pray acceptably, we must come looking at all his attributes. They must there cluster, as the vine-fruits on the vine. They must fill all the eye, and ravish all the heart.

II. And as we are social beings, the mode of our approach must show that we are not praying alone, that we belong to a praying family; and we should wish to get near to his presence, and not pray at a distance—as one expressed it, "with a rope about our neck." The child would choose to come where the father was, if he could speak to him, and not stand at a distance, as if he were praying by proxy to an *absent* father.

And here we shall feel it very important to say,

III. That our prayers must go up with sincerity before him, and with that open frankness that love is accustomed to generate. And we should really desire the blessing we need, and not some other, that we are afraid to ask for, as if we were held in the attitude of foreigners, who were supplicating mercies which we not only did not deserve, but had no reason to expect. God does not love this slavish attitude in those who supplicate favors at his hands.

IV. We must have our eyes filled with the precious Mediator: he must be to us "the chief among ten thousands, and altogether lovely."

We must be glad and happy that we may approach him through a

name so precious and so prevalent. Thus only can we hope that our prayers may come up before him, and our cry reach even to his ear.

V. We must not fail to approach him with a spirit of submission. This, however, will not imply indifference. The affection that brings us nearest to him will be the farthest possible from indifference—not light differs more from grossest darkness.

There can be no resignation, unless the heart desires earnestly the blessing it supplicates.

It hardly need be said,

VI. We must come with a spirit of humility and penitence. The suppliant, who can for one single moment forget that he is a suppliant will deserve to be repulsed in the very prayer he makes.

Beggars do not come to our doors to make a *demand* upon our charity, and rebel if they are repulsed.

VII. It would be natural and indispensable that we remember that we have received blessings from the same hand before, and there is no part of our plea that is more efficacious than where we tell of the mercies received in days gone by.

We smile propitiously upon the beggar who can call to mind that he had been fed from our table before, and clad from our wardrobe. Then he shows that any favors we bestow, will not be squandered upon him.

Here arise several questions.

1. Ought impenitent men to pray? If it can be shown that there is no part of the prayer that ought not to be in the heart of every sinner, then every sinner ought to pray.

If the view we have taken be correct, then they ought. There is no one of these qualifications that the sinner ought not to possess.

If he ought to respect the divine character; if he ought to sincerely desire divine blessings; if he should come in the only way given among men whereby he can be saved; if he ought to come with a thankful heart; if he ought to have his eye filled with a precious Mediator; if he ought to pray for those blessings that God pleases to give; if he ought to pray with a spirit of humility and penitence; if he ought to pray remembering that he has received blessings from the same hand before;—if thus the sinner should pray, then, surely, every sinner ought to pray.

Thus we see that duty requires a whole world to be prostrate before God in prayer for the blessings he has seen fit to give in *answer* to prayer.

If any plead to dispute their acceptance, and not pray, they may take the responsibility upon themselves. Whatever may have

been the opinion of other preachers on this subject, the present preacher chooses to express it as his opinion that every sinner ought to pray.

But here arises another question.

2. How will prayer be accepted without these qualifications? I answer, it will not; and I answer on the authority of God.

And if sinners choose to pray, leaving out of view the qualifications with which they should pray, they must answer to their own consciences.

MOTIVES TO PRAYER.

1. It is God's appointed medium of communicating blessings to them.

2. Prayer fits us to receive those blessings.

How futile are the hopes of sinners, when, without any prayer, they hope to receive all those comforts that God has promised through his Son! How important, then, that the house of Israel should be much in prayer for those who are perishing in their sins!

How wonderful the condescension of God, that he will hear a sinner pray!

No. XVII.

LUKE XVIII. 13.

God be merciful to me a sinner.

This parable was intended to reprove the self-righteous. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God on the heart." Hence our opinions of ourselves differ often very widely from God's opinion of us. Sometimes the matter of the action may be right and yet the heart wrong. The text is the prayer of one who sees all to be wrong. The publican was reviewing his heart and glancing a thought across his miserably dissolute life. The review filled him with pain, and he gave vent to his feelings in the best of prayers. It speaks the language of every true penitent. My plan will be to bring into view the feelings that dictate such a prayer.

I. It implies great self-abasement and deep humiliation.

1. I have dishonored the eternal God. I have been saying to God all my life time, "Depart from me, I desire not a knowledge of thy ways."

2. I have helped crucify the Lord of glory. I had in his death as direct an agency as if I had been there and drove the nails.

3. I have grieved the Holy Spirit. I have despised his merciful interposition. Have "grieved the Spirit of the Lord whereby I might have been sealed unto the day of redemption."

4. I have grieved the people of the saints of the most high God. I have expelled them from my society and have been willing to be expelled from theirs for ever.

5. I have helped to pollute sinners. As if I had not found the world sufficiently defiled, I have employed my time and talents to make it more vile still. "Thus have I spoken and done evil things as I could."

6. I have polluted my own soul and have provoked God to prepare me a hell, where I shall be shut up in darkness for ever.

II. The prayer implies a deep conviction that none but God can help!

1. Christians cannot help me.

2. Ministers cannot.

3. Means cannot.

4. Angels cannot.

5. I cannot help myself.

It requires an almighty arm to raise me from the pit into which I have fallen.

III. The prayer may imply a conviction that we can be relieved on no principle but that of grace or mercy. Even goodness, in its simple state, cannot favor a rebel.

"A pardoning God is zealous still,
For his own holiness."

No. XVIII.

“LOOK AND LIVE.”

JOHN III. 14.

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up

SIN has produced the misery sinners endure, and the approaching everlasting death that they fear. As murmuring at the light food upon which God fed them in the desert brought down the judgment, so the wisdom and goodness of God must provide the remedy. The brazen serpent was of Divine contrivance, and illustrated “him who was to be lifted up upon the cross” and draw all nations unto him.

1. The remedy God provides *is the only one*. The Israelites who were bitten of the fiery flying serpent, perished, every soul of them, unless they looked to him that was lifted up.

2. The remedy bore resemblance to the instrument of the plague. So Christ had on the same nature with the race that fell.

3. There must be confidence in the prescription. The serpent healed none but such as expected help from that source. So there must be saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, or men will not be healed from the deadly plagues of sin.

4. There was something to be done in proof of that confidence. They must look to the brazen serpent that was put upon the pole, or else the wound rankled, and death ensued.

5. In both cases the remedy was simple: “Look and live.”

6. There seemed no connection between the wondrous look and the restoration procured.

REMARKS.

1. The ease with which sinners may have life is no security that they shall live. We are not told of any that looked to the brazen serpent and lived, but are only told that when “they looked they lived.”

2. How wanton must have been the death of any that died. Either they would not look until they were blind, or had not faith enough to look and procure the salvation desired, and must have gone down to the grave the most wanton horde of suicides that perished in the desert.

3. The agency that we should exert to induce sinners to look to Christ, is beautifully illustrated in the ease with which they could save their dying friends. There seemed no need that any should die. The serpent was set up for the whole camp and in the sight of *all*.

No. XIX.

MATTHEW XXV. 41.

Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

THERE will yet come a day of righteous retribution. Men may try not to believe it, but still the day rolls on. Every beating pulse brings it nearer. On that dreadful day the Lord Jesus will sit in judgment on the conduct of men.

Then sinners will receive their sentence from his lips. There will be gathered together before him all nations.

I. Let us anticipate and review this sentence—*Depart from me, ye cursed.*

That the sinner will see what must be his sentence in the very first line of that destiny.

He must depart from Christ, and from the very presence of his holiness; it need not be said that this will be away from heaven, and from glory.

There will not be merely the idea of *banishment*, but of banishment from all that is *good and holy*.

There will also be the idea of a wo following, for they are to *depart accursed*. Hence the *finger of scorn* will be pointed at them in whatever world they retire. And this will be the most dreadful ingredient in their everlasting destruction; for if there is any one part of the creation that is more accursed than another, it will be the world of death.

If any kingdom should have occasion to export any considerable portion of its population, there would follow such convicts to the world of their exile, the hard thoughts, and corroding reflections, and the imprecations of all the civil, and decent, and sober portion of that community, to light upon them, and rest upon them, and

be the eternal associates of their exile. And it would write the history of their character and destiny in darker and blacker lines than any other picture of their waywardness.

O! if the sinner could but look back and beckon heaven into sympathy and into tears, it would mitigate the most appalling feature of his exile.

But he must go, accursed of angels and of men; and if even devils do not join in the curse, and the execration, it will be well for his poor soul.

II. They are to go accursed into *everlasting fire*, prepared for the devil and his angels.

Here the ruined of the human family must go into a world that was not prepared for them; not for a wo that they did not deserve, for this can never happen under the government of God, but *prepared for the devil and his angels*. As if man could not have been expected, after a Savior was offered, to have so sinned as to deserve this destiny, and come to this ruined and wretched world.

And if angels will have their theme of everlasting sympathy over the wayward and the lost, much of that sympathy will be spent on that very case.

Now if men can have the presumption to say, that there will be no fire connected with their everlasting destruction, they can have their own opinion, as to the means by which a punishment thus expressed shall be inflicted.

III. This sentence will be pronounced with the authority of the Lord Jesus himself, the very Savior that used to weep over sinners, and say, "O that thou hadst hearkened unto my commandments, then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea." And this, it seems to me, will be one of the most aggravated circumstances of the lost sinner's wo, that his sentence was pronounced by the very lips of the pardoning Redeemer. But I remark,

IV. This sentence will be publicly issued, in the presence of assembled worlds. It will not be done in the corner. It will not be like those private executions that take place within the walls of a prison. The report will go out and be advertised through the lowest caverns of hell. And it will also be reported amid the throngs of the blessed in heaven, and they will all know how miserable this section of the human family have made themselves.

REMARKS.

1. The great wo of their condemnation will be, that sinners will go, convinced that their condemnation is just. "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant."

2. It is not the worst of sinners only that will be thus condemned, but *the very best of sinners*; men who cannot remember that they have ever treated unkindly the Son of God.

While he will say to them, "I was a hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick and in prison, and ye visited me not." "And yet this same Jesus made all the worlds, and is the proprietor of the cattle upon a thousand hills."

And when this truth shall glare upon the worlds, and shall be written upon the disc of every star; and there is opportunity to compare this with the conduct of the sinner, how, in bold relief, will his iniquities stand out to view!

In the mean time, they will not be able to recollect that they ever, in any case, turned a hungry beggar from their door.

Probably many, who will be the subjects of this condemnation, were the professed followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, and many served at his altar. There will be heard, at least, this murmur, "We have eaten and drunken in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets;" but he will add, "I know you not." "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

3. It hardly need be said, that when this sentence is issued, *the culprit will go despairing*.

They will feel as if they had turned their backs upon the whole civilized world, and that the whole civilized world have turned their backs upon them.

O, who that has human feelings can but stop and wail over this wide-spread desolation and ruin! "They were flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone." Many of them, perhaps, went from our families and our firesides down to that unspeakable wo.

Truly the world of death will be a dark spot in the moral creation of God!!

No. XX.

MATTHEW VIII. 34.

And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coast.

THE Lord Jesus sometimes retired from the multitude, that he might rest from the fatigue of constant labor. On one occasion, he directed the disciples to carry him over the lake, where on his arrival, he had opportunity to cast out the devils who possessed two men. The devils, having besought him to let them enter a herd of swine, he did so, and they all ran down into the sea and perished. The people, afflicted with their loss, prayed him to depart out of their coast.

The subject will furnish me an occasion to show why a people sometimes suffer the Lord Jesus to depart from them, after he has been present to revive and save them.

Let the question be, why do revivals of religion subside?

I. Because even the people of God have not fully appreciated their value to themselves, or to the world around them, dying in a mass in their iniquities.

Revivals are their watering, their growing seasons. But for them, our Christians would die before they had made much advancement in holiness, and half had failed of heavenly happiness.

II. They are not as much revived as the occasion demands, or as they seem to be, and are held up to unnatural exertions, which are required beyond their feelings. The bow is bent to unnatural intensity. They are tired of the work of gathering in such an abundant harvest.

III. There are sacrifices demanded of them that they are not willing longer to endure; they would fold their hands and lie down and rest; they are tired of the call any longer to perpetual exertion, and would say, "A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep," forgetting that God has added, "*so shall thy poverty come.*"

IV. They imagine that the work must subside of course. Showers cannot last through the year. Past revivals have all gone over.

V. They persuade themselves that they have done pretty well already. They have worked hard several months.

VI. Because many professed Christians never came up to the work at all, and they will now step out of the harness, to let others labor in their turn. They felt reproached till the work subsided.

VII. Because the Christians each supposed that he would throw off the responsibility of letting the work subside. Ah, how mistaken! The ship's crew are perishing, and a few hundred souls are saved, but scores and thousands are crying out for help. O, send us the life boat!

If any one man in the Church must feel the whole responsibility, he would die.

VIII. Because they often think that more has been accomplished than has been. Some have seemed to yield who are going back. Some have been brought to the house of God, who will turn away. Some have seemed reformed, but are returning again, "like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

IX. Some let go, because their worldly business pressed them. They had not time to keep on. Their spirit of worldliness complained, they again wanted to take hold of the things of this life.

X. Some let go because they thought they could easily take hold again. But they now find that they have lost a precious advantage, for the god of this world will not be so easily divorced as they imagine.

XI. The people sometimes throw the responsibility on the minister, and he sometimes on them. Whichever way this happens, it is wrong; for the minister must feel that he is at the head of a party which is to save the perishing and lost in the congregation, and his Church are to feel that they are to be workers together with God, in saving the hundreds ready to perish.

XII. Sinners quit the means of grace because the Church begin to let their consciences alone.

REMARKS.

1. Revivals should never subside. If the causes of the decline are always wicked, then they should never exist.

If exertions are made that are inconsistent with health and order, they should never have been made, but if correct exertions they should never subside.

If the feelings of God's people have not risen above what was proper, they should never be permitted to ebb. And we have never known a revival where correct feeling exceeded the bounds of propriety.

2. If a people have let a season of revival go by, it becomes them to be humble and inquire how they can ever be forgiven.

3. They should immediately rise to all that feeling and exertion which a state of revival demands.

4. When God's Churches will act right, then will commence a train of revivals that will never subside. They will not only go round *the year*, but will go round the circle of many years.

We shall have an Egyptian harvest where one crop will come in after another, and we shall have the joy of shouting *the harvest home* at the return of every moon. Every spring-tide will hear shouted reports of a correspondent spring-tide in the moral world. The showers of grace will fall so uniformly and abundantly that we shall have only to gather in the fruits of one, and another harvest begins while yet there are abundant fruits of the former harvest safely lodged in the granary to feed and replenish the whole land.

O then, with how much joy will the Churches join to shout the *millennial harvest home!* till with a glad response, the heavenly arches will gladly and cheerfully respond a long and loud Amen!

No. XXI.

PROVERBS IV. 18.

But the path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

THIS is one of those texts that I have always been afraid to use in publishing the word of the Lord. I have had my fears about my use of it. It seems to exhibit the Christian as in happy circumstances. He seems to set out with the morning sun and to travel with its beams meridian, and his path to shine more and more luminous until he comes to the perfect day. But I have been afraid that this view of the Christian character would not comport with matters of fact or with my own experience. I have been afraid to exhibit the Christian as a timid and fearful man, and to be in doubt all the way whether he should reach heaven at

last. And still the contrary view I dare not exhibit, I dare not exhibit the Christian feeling his way along toward heaven like a blind man, lest this gloomy view should not comport with the Scriptures. For "the path of the just," we are told, "is as the shining light that shines more and more unto the perfect day." Still one is troubled to explain a passage like this, "Whoso walketh in darkness and hath no light, let him trust in the Lord and stay himself upon his God." But unless this text corresponds with that other text, "Clouds and darkness are around about him, judgment and righteousness, are the habitation of his throne," referring the whole to the events of Divine Providence that may for a moment obscure the path of life while yet it is destined to shine out at length in all its brightness and glory, then it will be on the whole difficult to exhibit the Christian course consistently with the plodding, hesitating experience of many believers. But we must "let God be true, though every man a liar." This is a maxim in my exhibition of Divine truth, which I have always endeavored to pursue, hoping so to shape my course that I may come out at last the friend of God.

The Spirit of the Lord is guiding his people to heaven where he will at last see the King in his beauty, and rejoice and be glad in him for ever. All the light therefore that comes from heaven, and shines upon the Christian's path, is calculated to guide him there. The church is represented as conducted on by the Holy Ghost to that happy world where the Redeemer is. *The Light* by which they pass on to that world which shines from the glory of God and the Lamb. We are thus prepared to say, in the

I. Place *where heaven is*. The place where there is a concentration of all that light that shines upon the Christian course.

II. We see how we are to know that our course is toward heaven. If we suppose holy actions to shine more luminously than any other course in this world, and that every exercise of holy affections, was a star thrown out in that place where he puts forth that exercise by those who are treading the path toward heaven; we see how at length that must become a very luminous path.

III. We see how others may know as well as ourselves that our path is directly toward heaven.

IV. Thus we see how we can have evidence that we *are* or *are not* growing in grace. If we are thus growing, our path will become brighter and brighter, and we shall have increased more and

more, the evidence that we are risen with Christ, and seeking those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.

V. The evidence is rather against us, if we find our joy diminished, and our lamp go out, for we have abundant Divine assurance to prove that God would make our path more luminous, instead of more dark.

No. XXII.

GENESIS XXVII. 22.

The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.

WHEN Jacob was old and had become blind, he one day sent his son Esau into the field to procure venison and prepare him savory meat, that while he ate it and was happy, he might deliver to him the prediction which in those days fathers were accustomed to deliver to their children before their death. This prediction was often a prophecy, especially in the case of the Patriarchs, in the land of Israel. In the case of the pious patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob especially, the prediction delivered over their children told the whole story down to the end of the patriarchal system. But in an evil hour Esau had sold his birthright to Jacob for a mess of pottage. But the father, either not knowing of the transaction, or not remembering it, was about to counteract the design, and still give the birthright to Esau, and had sent him into the field to procure savory meat with that intent. But Jacob was induced by Rebekah his mother to procure some meat while Esau was in the field, and thus obtain the blessing clandestinely. She so directed him as to carry the deception through, and make his father think he was blessing Esau, while in fact he was blessing Jacob. He was to cover his hands that he might appear hairy as Esau was. But, as nature will be true to herself, he could not assume the *voice* of Esau, although he deceptively covered his hands; and when at length Esau came from the field weary and hungry, and the moment of the transaction had arrived, he stated to his father that he had come to present to him the venison he had gone to procure in the field.

The transaction was very solemn, and very momentous to the whole patriarchal family, as we shall see in the sequel.

And now to make use of the text, we shall draw from it this doctrine. *It illustrates the dissonance between the profession of the lips and the action of the hands.* The lips, you are aware, are used as the organ of profession, and the hands the instrument of action.

This want of agreement or dissonance, I shall attempt to illustrate.

1. We hear many a man pray for a revival, and in long protracted quotations from the Old Testament. He will plead that "the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it." And we hear him plead again "that righteousness may run down our streets like a mighty shower."

2. We hear him pour forth in sweet and delightful strains for the Jews, the ancient people of God, that they may be brought in with the fulness of the Gentile nations."

3. We hear him pray for the slaves, the sable sons of Africa—that "Ethiopia may stretch out her hands to God."

4. We hear him pray for the suffering poor, that "God would feed them, and comfort them, and guide them by his counsel, and afterward bring them to glory."

5. We hear him pray for the heathen, "that the kingdom of Christ may be enlarged from the river to the ends of the earth—that the heathen may come to his light, and kings to the brightness of his rising." But when we have looked the prayer over and repeated all the quotations which would take an hour, we are anxious to know whether those who thus devoutly pray, *do as well as pray*—whether they have poured in for the conversion of the Jews, their silver and gold; whether they have opened their hearts wide for the poor heathen; whether they have treated the slave more kindly than other men; and whether they are willing to make a sacrifice for them.

REMARKS.

1. We see the sure and only way to happiness and glory. We are to see at all times that the language of our lips corresponds with our actions.

2. We see how evidently those are mistaken who appear happy, but do not live uprightly, and do not let their life correspond with their profession.

3. "Honesty is the best policy." If Jacob had acted with per-

fect uprightness, we should never have been interested or troubled with the history of his wrongs, and the outrageous attack of the inhabitants upon his family, and we should never have heard, in his dying benediction, "Cursed be thy wrath, for it was cruel." And Jacob would never had to sleep on the stones at Jordan, and have felt the loneliness and the desertion of that hour.

4. But good often comes out of evil. We never should have had the history of Penuel and the name of Israel, nor have read of that brook where he passed with his staff and had now returned with two bands. Nor have read of the ladder that reached to heaven on which the angels of God ascended and descended, or of the Lord of angels with whom he conversed, who declared himself to be his God, and promised "that in him and in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed."

5. Parents would do well to beware how they lead their children into sin. If his mother Rebekah had not instigated him to sin, and to do that deed that ruined his brother's prospects for ever, she would not have had to lay in sleepless agony, while he slept upon that journey by the side of that stream, and where he afterward wrestled with God and prevailed, and where he built an altar to the Lord who was with him in the way that he went.

No. XXIII.

ECCLESIASTES VIII. 11.

Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of man is fully set in them to do evil.

In what emphatic lines does the text express the long suffering patience of God? It is here drawn from that very mercy provided, that lets the sinner live; that feeds and clothes him; and comforts him, and heals all his sickness. And all this is from the slowness of the wrath of God to punish iniquity.

Here let it be my object to show,

I. That God is very slow in punishing iniquity.

A cursory view of some scripture facts on this subject, will pour upon it an overwhelming light.

He bore with the old world, we know, after he had resolved on

its destruction, one hundred and twenty years. He let the righteous soul of Lot suffer all this time with their prevailing iniquities.

He bore with the Canaanites, four hundred years after the cry of their crimes had reached his holy ear.

And he bore with Sodom after the cry of its iniquities had gone up to heaven, and been reported through that happy world for several generations.

He bore with Ahab, after he had provoked the Lord God to anger, and after he had sinned more than all the kings that were before him.

And he bore with Jezebel after she had spilled the blood of the prophets, and after she had filled her whole kingdom with *false prophets*, and with lies and blood; and after she had committed iniquities, that ought to have hanged her long before.

And he bore with Voltaire after he had been an infidel beyond the ordinary age of man, and had filled his own land and all other lands within his reach, with his "wrath against the Nazarenes," and his exterminating quarrel with the whole Church of the Living God.

And he has born with drunkards, and the profane, and the debauched, till they have wearied out his patience and filled the whole world with crimes. He bore with Nero, and Alexander, and Bonaparte, till their crimes had gone up to heaven. And we could name others, who were systematic in their crimes, and spilt the best blood in their kingdoms; destined at length to come down blasted and disgraced like old oaks of the wood, that had been withered by the lightnings of heaven, and stood the curse of the forest for a century.

It will be my object to show,

II. That for this very reason, because God endures, men have grown presumptuous in their sins.

In many of the cases referred to, this is too evidently a fact to be denied. How long was God provoked with the iniquities of Pharaoh! until the punishments that God poured upon that land had reached every house, and scattered desolation and death through every family.

But a more important inquiry is,

III. How is it that this long suffering patience of God emboldens men in their iniquities?

1. In the first place, it gives them leisure to sophisticate the truth. It leads them on in the boldest perversions of infidelity;

hence sprang up that proverb, "Since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning."

2. It gives them time to mature their vicious habits. Doubtless the old world was much the more wicked because they lived so long.

3. Men become committed against the truth, and do many deeds of darkness in consequence of those commitments. Jezebel had her false prophets, and her "prophets of the grove," who fed at her table, and lived on her bounty, until the moment came when God would have her thrown from her own window, and her body collected as mere food for dogs.

How amazing is the long suffering patience of God, that he will so permit his rich mercies to be abused!

If there is any one thought that adds to the climax of total depravity, and renders men more desperate still than they would seem to be, it is this very one, that men have abused the goodness of the Lord so as to infer from it liberty to sin.

No. XXIV.

I JOHN III. 3.

And every one that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

EVERY one who would evince his right to hope that he shall appear before the Lamb in the great last day, should be seeing to it that this hope purifies him, as he is pure.

How does it appear that this hope will so operate? God thus asserts, "And every one that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

I. It sets up the noblest object of ambition. To see Christ as he is, and be like him, is an object that fires the soul with heavenly ambition. If one might hope to be an angel, how impressing the thought;—but to hope to be like Christ, how much rather.

II. It offers us the pleasantest work. What is so sweet as to be putting on the character of Jesus Christ, and to put off the body of sin and death—the old Adam?

III. It will very soon be done. It is a short enterprise; a few

years of toil, and the hill is ascended, and the height gained; and then, O how sweet to look back upon the wilderness all trodden over!

IV. The work associates us with the best beings that have ever lived. The patriarchs and prophets, and apostles and martyrs, with all the holy men of whom the world was not worthy, and who had all this same work to do; and they did it, and are now in heaven, reaping the rewards of piety. "Though dead, they yet speak;" as remembered holy example ever will.

V. We are blessed as fast as the work is done. To put off sin, how sweet; to be pardoned, how sweet; but how much sweeter to be holy! You saw that family going to the West: how happy, every hill they ascended; but when at last they reached the heights of the Alleghany, and looked down upon the broad valley of the Mississippi, how sweetly they sat down to rest; and they pitied those who had yet the hills to climb.

VI. Hope looks forward and sees the whole journey to the end all through. It is not a journey at a venture; it is not a leap in the dark; it is not a conflict at hazard. It is the very nature of hope to keep the courage up, and bring the final issue into clear view.

VII. The *spectators of the conflict* inspire us. "Seeing that we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth easily beset us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."

VIII. And then, finally, the crown of glory—the palms of victory!

REMARKS.

1. How, then, are we to keep alive this hope? By urging on the work. And is there no other way? No, not any.

2. This hope, of course, then falters when the work stops; when we cease to add grace to grace, and cease the work of pressing on towards the kingdom of God. I can tell every man how much hope of heaven he has, by his earnestness to be holy, by his effort to be clean.

3. But may not frequent pardons keep our hope alive, while yet we are not becoming more holy? No; not if our hope is this *Christian hope*. If it does not purify us, it is the hope of the hypocrite, that shall perish when God taketh away the soul. In the Holy Scriptures we have this blessed assurance, that we are saved by hope.

4. But do not seasons of reviving prove our hope a good one?

No; we may compass ourselves about with sparks of our own kindling, and walk by the light of our own fire.

5. How, then, may we be sure, if our hope revives, that it is a good hope, through grace, and "shall prove an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast"? There will revive with it an effort to be more holy. The man who put a twenty dollar note into a letter, the other day, to pay one from whom seven years ago he had taken five dollars, gave evidence that his well-grounded heavenly hopes were reviving. That minister who seemed so much waked up to the interests of the soul that he preached two hours, would have been believed to have revived his heavenly hopes, had he not broken his covenant with his eyes that evening; that Christian that prayed until he swooned, had he not been proud of that prayer, and angry to have its piety brought into question. If we have this hope in us, it must purify us, even as Christ is pure.

6. But must it make us perfect, "even as he is perfect?" A revival hope should keep running as long as life endures.

No. XXV.

NUMBERS XXIII. 10.

Let me die the death of the righteous and let my last end be like his.

In this chapter we have a fine exhibition of a conflict between a conscience that God holds under close restraint, while that conscience is connected with a heart totally depraved.

Balaam was sent to curse Israel previously to a conflict between them and the Canaanites. Balak the king of Moab was to take the lead in that war and hired Balaam the son of Beor to come and curse Israel. He evidently wished to succeed that he might have the wages of unrighteousness. But his conscience forbid and the dumb ass was made to speak and to rebuke the madness of the prophet. Again and again he tried, but God every time he tried forbid him and turned the curse into blessings. He at length blessed them all together and inverted the whole into a curse upon their enemies. Death is not to the good man a surprising event. He has thought on it and prepared for it. It is an event he has prayed over more than any other since the period of his new birth. "And

he took up his parable and said, Balak the King of Moab hath brought me from Aram, out of the mountains of the east, saying, come, curse me Jacob, and come defy me Israel. How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied? For from the tops of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him; Lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Thus have we in the closing words of the mercenary prophet, the very language that will burst from the lips of every dying sinner. It is easy to show that the good man dies with a very different set of affections.

I. He can have the happiest reflections. He can look back upon a life of Godliness and forward to heaven as a scene of interminable blessedness.

II. He can take the happiest circumspective view. He has kept his family and circumstances shaped for the grave, and now comes home, unless his hope deceives him, like a shock of corn fully ripe.

III. He can look forward with pleasure. Heaven lies in his prospect and looms up before him like a ship returning from sea. He often thinks of that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

IV. He has made preparation for his departure. His peace is made with God, and he sometimes, when hope prevails, takes hold of the things within the veil.

V. He dies happy. God gives him dying comforts. It is the happiest hour of his life, the hour that introduces him to his King "the Lord of hosts." It is the hour David spoke of when he said "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

VI. Christ is with him as he promised, "I will be with thee in six troubles and in seven I will not forsake thee." Flesh and heart have failed him, but God has become the strength of his heart and portion for ever.

VII. Death finishes his trials. He shall hunger no more neither thirst any more. He is passing through the waters, and the promise is, "they shall not overflow thee." He is walking through the fire, and the promise is, "it shall not kindle upon him."

VIII. Death consummates his hopes. It introduces him to better society and better comforts than he leaves behind. "He traverses the river of the water of life and plucks the fruit fresh from the tree of life."

IX. He applies to his soul the leaves of that tree which it was promised should be "for the healing of the nations."

REMARKS.

1. We are not surprised that a wicked man should choose such a death.

2. How astonishing that the hope of such a death should not stimulate to a holy life. "But he loves the wages of unrighteousness," and rather risks dying wretched than living holy.

3. Ungodly men do not act according to their conviction. And this is their shame and will be their disgrace for ever.

4. They are then unreasonable beings and God will convict them out of their own mouths.

5. If then Sinners will treat their own souls so unreasonably it is not wonderful they will treat unreasonably the Son of God, and pierce themselves through with many sorrows.

 No. XXVI.

ACTS XVII. 30.

And the times of this ignorance God winked at ; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.

PAUL was in Athens, and preached there, to a congregation of idolators the doctrine of the text. By the times of this ignorance it is supposed God meant, "the times in which he permitted all nations to walk in their own ways."

Nevertheless, he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

When it is said, "the times of this ignorance God winked at," we are taught, that when God has given up a nation, or an individual, to walk in his own ways, he may leave them without those rebukes which he will send after those he has not so given up. Not that he, by winking, may be said to approve of their sins. This he cannot do. He long suffered the Assyrians and Babylonians, and the other nations bordering upon Israel, to be unmo-
lest, but he afterward punished them.

But men that have his word he commands everywhere to repent now. *It will be my object to show the obligations resting upon all men to repent immediately.*

1. The duty is a reasonable one. To know, and confess, and hate, and quit sin, and undo the mischief it has done. *Every part of it is most reasonable.*

2. The being sinned against is doing sinners good. "He does them good, and gives them rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness."

3. It has required great forbearance in him to keep them out of hell so long.

4. They cannot tell when this forbearance may cease.

5. This forbearance may cease suddenly. "At midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him." He hath set them in slippery places.

6. They are daily increasing the work, and making it more difficult if they ever should repent.

7. They have now more time to undo the mischief. This is a part of repentance.

8. If sinners would treat God as they feel themselves obliged to treat men, consistency of character would require them to repent.

9. If they would be happy, to repent would set the conscience at rest.

10. If they would have the favor of God, which is eternal life.

11. If they would have the confidence of men; who can trust the man who will not restore what he has robbed from his Maker?

12. It is what we all mean to do; and while we delay the work is becoming harder. As the sinner goes away from God, his path becomes overgrown with thorns and briars; compelling him, *if ever he returned*, to hew a passage back to God and heaven, and the way of life, by dint of excessive labor.

13. It is the command of God. And if God did not command us to do what would do ourselves infinite good, we should still be under unalterable obligations to obey. But when he commands us to do that which will thus make us happy in all the processes, and eternally blessed at the end, our obligations to obedience are amazingly multiplied.

REMARKS.

1. Then sinners cannot be convicted too soon.
2. Then ministers cannot preach too plain.
3. Then convicted sinners cannot be too much distressed.

4. Then we should let no stupid sinner alone.
5. We should consider our children ruined till they repent.
6. Thus there is no security for character till men repent.
7. Thus godliness has promise of the "life that now is, as of that which is to come."

No. XXVII.

JEREMIAH XVII. 5.

Thus saith the Lord; cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord: for he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited."

To trust in the Lord, and make flesh our arm, and have our heart depart from the Lord, are three phrases meaning the same thing; and is characteristic of the whole human family by nature. It describes a heart that leans toward the creature in all its operations, and in all its hopes, and in the whole volume of its desires and wishes. Thus have we an inspired description of the nature of man as he came out from the hand of his Creator, and as he goes on to operate in this dying world to form a character in preparation for his eternal state. This condition of man I shall attempt to describe.

I. He relies on his own resources to supply his wants in this world. He trusts in riches, forgetting that they "take themselves wings and fly away, as an eagle toward heaven." No man can tell, whatever his resources are to-day, that he shall not be a beggar to-morrow.

1. The same may be said of the man who depends upon human esteem to establish his character. No one but he who has the whole character in his hand, and has under his entire control all the future circumstances that go to make up that character, can tell what may be the changes that may go to alter his character and form him for an entirely different future destiny than that to which he seems subjected to-day.

2. And the same may be said of the man that founds his hopes of heaven on the opinion that others, in an incautious hour, may

have expressed of his character. On this ground, Judas had a good character, who afterward sold and betrayed his master for thirty pieces of silver. He knew not "what manner of man he was."

3. The man who thus founds his hopes of heaven on the opinion of others, does not much differ from him who depends upon human means to bring him to that eternal life he hopes for. His hope of heaven will not be very likely to prove that "anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast, entering into that which is within the veil." He will be liable to be driven about by every wind of doctrine, and exhibit a piety too vascillating to take a firm hold of those realities revealed as the objects of faith.

4. The same is the case with the man who intends to meet God *without a Savior*, and lays the foundation of his immortal hopes on any good deeds he has done or may do. He will find, at length, that God is a consuming fire, and after he has walked awhile by the light of his own fire, he will have to lie down in everlasting sorrow

II. I shall attempt to decipher the illustration given us in the text.

1. "He shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh."

We have here a description of one of those vast tracts of the eastern desert covered with moveable sand, on which nothing will grow, but the meanest stunted heath (so called) or shrub, rising but a few feet from the ground, and where it stands the everlasting curse of the soil that grows it. "He shall not see when good cometh." That is, when another part of the desert may be watered by some fortuitous shower or dew, none will come nigh to it. The condition of the plant described is farther illustrated, when it is said to inhabit the "parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land not inhabited." Thus is added to sterility the idea of saltness, which proves the source of barrenness through the whole vegetable world; which shows the lonely and desolate condition as well as barrenness of the plant that attempts to grow and bear fruit, and come to any thing like maturity in this woful spot.

No. XXVIII.

2 CORINTHIANS VI. 2.

Behold now is the *accepted* time ; behold now is the day of salvation.

It is a gross and fatal error in the public creed and conscience, that effects are not looked for at the moment, or are to be expected when the gospel is preached. Ministers have not calculated that God will give his word success *while yet they are speaking*. And Christians have unkindly prayed and calculated that the truth may lodge and do good at some future hour. And sinners have laid up the truth for future use. Thus the gospel receives a go-by for the present moment. And yet,

I. The claims of the gospel forbid all this.

1. It proffers sinners every blessing they need ; pardon, justification, adoption, sanctification, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, and eternal life.

2. Its injunctions are from the highest authority ; from God, from Jesus Christ, from the Holy Ghost ; from him who holds in his hands the keys of hell and of death.

3. It proffers blessings that sinners cannot do without. They are undone *now* without them, and without them are lost for ever.

4. It sets the *present time* as the only one for the acceptance of its blessing. They are withdrawn if not now accepted, to be offered again perhaps never !

5. The offer is taken back unless accepted now.

6. The present acceptance of the gospel is more probable now, than at any future time, and the recording angel waits to minute the sinner's refusal. As the sinner glides down the broad smooth way to death, a wilderness of thorns and briars grow up behind him, high as heaven, through which he must hew his way back, if he ever reaches heaven ; hence every furlong he proceeds, increases the improbability of his safe and timely retreat.

II. Why then does the gospel produce no immediate effect ?

1. Because the gospel offers the sinner a salvation he disapproves ; a *holy* salvation, a *gracious* salvation.

2. It requires him to put on a character that he disapproves and hates !

3. It proffers the formation of relationships that are unwelcome ; to all the regenerate ; a brotherhood and heirship with Jesus Christ ; a kind and eternal fraternity with the household of faith.

4. There are pleasures and friendships to be given up, that are greatly beloved. The heart has taken a dying hold of objects that prolong its death.

5. The sinner is too stupid to estimate the value of the offer made. The mind is a vacuum that has been empty till it hates truth, and will not think. It instinctively repels the truth.

6. The offer of the gospel mercy is considered a mere intellectual proposition, that the sinner is to survey, and contemplate, and reason about. But God directs his gospel to the heart, for it to feel and act upon. It is a blaze sent to melt the heart, (the blow pipe). It is a hammer lifted by the hand of God to break the heart. It is a charge meant to be lodged deep in the *heart*, to blow it up, and send it broken and shivered to the skies. It has to do with the understanding and conscience only, as they constitute the pass way to the heart. If the truth lodges in either, and does not travel on to the heart, nothing is done. If when it comes there it meets a rock, it rebounds back to heaven. If the mind and conscience, truth's avenue, be cased over, and thus its passage to the heart be blocked up, the heart remains whole till the world is *burned*.

No. XXIX.

PSALMS CXXXVII. 5, 6.

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

JERUSALEM was the centre of worship in Israel, and was the type of the church of God in after ages. The kingdom of Christ is that absorbing interest that should occupy supremely the hearts of God's people.

I. What is the extent of that interest which we may not forget ? What does it imply or involve ?

1. The divine glory. In no part of the operations of Jehovah has he so fully displayed himself as in the work of redemption.

His mighty power and godhead are displayed in the things that are seen. His wisdom can easily be discerned, and his goodness inferred from the visible creation. Still, what the poet says, is true, that—

“God, in the person of his Son,
Has all his mightiest works outdone.”

Here the whole of the divine character is drawn out to view, as well as his grace, and mercy, and long-suffering, and patience, and endurance, as his *more awful and terrifying attributes*.

May we, then, forget an interest that involves all these; that lets down, as it were, the mighty God to the composed and deliberate contemplation of his creatures, or rather, lifts them into the rank of angels, and to a close and intimate companionship with himself, and with his Son, Jesus Christ? Now, where is an interest so grand as this, or that may a moment come in for so large a share of our affections, and command away our thoughts and our contemplations?

2. The interest of Zion involves the salvation of sinners. The church is composed of redeemed sinners. If it becomes enlarged, sinners are saved; and when stationary, none are added to the number of the saved. A long suspension of the divine influence may harden many, till they shall become incorrigible, and the truth never take hold again of their affections and their hearts. While our children shall see us caring supremely for Zion, they will not forget that they are the children of the covenant and the hope of the Church, and will view themselves as not at liberty to go on in the way of transgressors. Could we properly estimate the worth of the soul, we should never suffer any other interest to come in competition with it. What may I remember—what may I not forget, if Jerusalem has lost its power to interest me, and the eternal salvation of my neighbors and my children has not invaluable importance in my estimation?

3. The interest of Zion must prosper, in order to the present joy and comfort of his people. This can be said of no other concerns. We may be poor and disgraced and diseased, and may see taking their flight from us all the dear objects of time and sense, and yet may be happy; but not happy is the people of God while Zion languishes. The captive Jews could not sing the Lord's song in a strange land; their harps were hung upon the willows, till God should turn again their captivity.

4. Zion's prosperity involves the *growth and maturity* of religion

in the hearts of God's people. It is an interest as dear to them as is their own final redemption from sin, and their complete equipment for the paradise of God. When Zion is in the dust, believers suffer in their own individual spiritual interest.

While I have thus shown what is involved in the prosperity of Jerusalem, I have, I know, offered some reasons why *we may not forget her*. But let us, in the *second place*, look at another class of reasons which cannot so properly be considered as descriptive of the interest involved.

1. Because *God will not forget Jerusalem, we may not*. "He has graven her upon the palms of his hands." Her walls are continually before him. He governs the world for her sake, and will never for a moment turn his eye from her interest. While some other interest may attract us, and we may not forget the Church, and pour out but few prayers for her redemption into the heart of God, she will continue as dear and important as ever. "He will guard her as the apple of his eye."

2. The Lord Jesus will not forget the interest for which he died, because we forget. It is said of him, you know, that "he ever liveth to make intercessions for his people." A perpetual intercessor! what a delightful thought! He will not then forget the church for which he is interceding. His blood will remain the price of her redemption; his righteousness, her covering; his merits, her plea. In the darkest hour, when almost all have fled, Jesus is there; hard by the interest he watches, awake to protect the Church he purchased with his own blood.

3. Zion may not be forgotten by her sons, because her foes will not forget her. The Church has ever been in this world like the bush that Moses saw burning, but not consumed. The world has viewed her existence as its living reproach; her prosperity the object of its envy, and her honors as detracting from its beauty and glory. The report of all her revivals has gone down to hell, and circulated through all its precincts, to the glory of her God and King; and whenever there shall be another revival, it will be quickly reported in that territory of darkness. Hence, a perpetual warfare with her interests. The men of the world suppose themselves to have a high interest in the disgrace and the tears and the backslidings of the Church. They are mistaken: *but this alters not the fact*; and Jerusalem should not be forgotten by her friends while *her foes will not forget her*. If men will watch to do her hurt, believers should watch to do her good.

Finally—we may not forget Zion, as the church below is intimately connected with the Church above, and cannot suffer without exciting the interest of all heaven, or prosper, but it gives all heaven joy.

REMARKS.

1. There can be no dissensions among believers, as the Church is to each a paramount interest.

2. How mistaken are believers, if they imagine they *can suffer or prosper alone!*

3. How this subject enhances the worth of a revival!

4. How strikingly will the world be one in her interest, when the Lord Jesus shall spread the glory of Zion over all her friends, and the whole world be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. Ride on, blessed Lord Jesus, conquering and to conquer, until thy kingdom shall conquer all the nations, and cover the wide world, and until the time has come for thee to reign over all lands; and then thy friends will sing, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation;" and will add, "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, and blessed be his glorious name for ever, and let the whole world be filled with his glory: amen, and amen!"

 N o. XXX.

JOHN XVII. 4.

I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

THE character of the Lord Jesus Christ; the work that he would do, and the spirit with which he would enter upon that work, have been pointed out to the world so distinctly that "the way faring though a fool need not err therein." This work he had to finish when he made this prayer and *was finishing* it in the very prayer *itself*. Hence,

I. He had to finish the work of a *holy apostleship* which he had been doing all his life, but never finished until he closed this prayer, at the close of which he might have said "I am ready to be offered."

II. He had to finish the work of a *faithful evangelist*; that is had to show the apostles what he required of them in the faithful distribution of his message to a ruined world. We have a beautiful example of the manner in which this work was to be done in the history of the adulteress of Sichar, where he spent several days to promote a blessed work of God, and thus blew the trumpet of the gospel.

III. He had to finish the character of *faithfulness as a professor of Godliness*, thus evincing himself a true disciple of his own school.

IV. He had to exhibit to the full his character as an *amiable, benevolent and good man*. Thus he would prepare his family of disciples to so exhibit the character of their master, as to prepare them to say in their prayers "for me to live is Christ."

V. He had to finish the doing of the will of God, had yet *to die on the Cross* for the sins of a miserable world, and exhibit in his character a faithful high-priest. For this death, he was about to prepare. The associates of his sufferings were making themselves ready. And the Lord Jesus Christ would be careful not to show any reluctance to enter upon this work. Hence there would remain nothing in his case, but to give up the ghost and resign life and say "it is finished." And he went to his death in the vigor of manhood and sprightliness of youth, and bore his own cross up the hill on which he was crucified. This was in fulfillment of the very track that the prophets had pointed out for him, so that he might be said to die in the very centre of the world he came to redeem. And another thing, he died in that spot where it could the most easily be communicated to the rest of the world, not only the history of his suffering, but the *grand design* of his death. Thus, by merely uttering the story of his exit, they would the most effectually convince the world of the truth of this story, and use the most effectual means to bring them to exercise faith in his merits, and in his blood, and in his redemption.

Thus as from a central point, there goes forth the redemption of a world and the history of that redemption, and the only means that God will use in redeeming to his Son that miserable world for which the Savior laid down his life, and thus when he said "look unto me and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth, for I am God and there is none else," the world would not have far to look, it would only have to glance an eye through a few generations.

REMARKS.

1. We learn from this subject the grand secret of being ready to die. This consists in having our work all done ready for that hour

2. The subject leads us to reflect that many men of the world, that have adopted a similar sentiment, would seem to have been inspired in their adoption of this sentiment. It was said of Lord Nelson, in all his appointments in the navy in the British government, that his concluding remark, was *fifteen minutes before the time*, that thus they might save to each other and to him that precious time on which a nation's prosperity might depend. And this by the by, forms one of the best traits of Christian character and is as important in the Church of God, as it was in the British navy.

No. XXXI.

ROMANS XII. 12.

Continuing instant in prayer.

THE appropriateness and obligation of the duty of prayer, and the reasons why it should be instant, or earnest and incessant.

I. The appropriateness will appear when we consider that religion qualifies the Christian to pray.

1. By giving him a deep knowledge of his heart.

2. By giving him correct views of God.

3. By impressing him with the endured and impending miseries of ungodly men. This pre-eminently enables him to spread their whole case before God, and to plead with him in their behalf.

4. By correcting his motives of action, and thus preparing him to pray acceptably.

5. By rendering him familiar with the promises. He has prepared him to lay his own case and the case of others before a prayer-hearing God.

6. By habituating him to the duty, and rendering it pleasant.

7. By filling his soul with the love of benevolence.

II. The obligation arises from

1. The command of God.

2. The interest that the Christian has in the Divine glory.

3. He grows faster when he prays, and that in proportion to the fervidness of his prayers.

4. He has the best evidence of his own piety.
5. He gives the best evidence to others.

III. Reasons why the Christian should be instant, or earnest and incessant.

1. It is only instant prayer that can be evidence of strong Christian affections.

2. Each of the three cases that invite him to prayer are urgent cases. His own sanctification. It is of more importance to the believer that *himself* be saved than any body else. And he sees the importance to *his brethren* in Christ of their salvation, as nobody else can see it. He also sees the importance of the *salvation of sinners*. "Hence knowing the terrors of the law, he persuades men."

3. God has given special promise to incessant, urgent, instant prayer. Hence the cases spoken of in the Scripture.

4. The little time he has to pray and labor for God and his kingdom, and therefore "he must do whatsoever his hands find to do with his might, knowing that there is no wisdom nor device in the grave whither we haste."

5. The rest and reward in heaven.

6. Instant prayer is the best means of his own growth in grace, and comfort, and *hope of blessedness*, here and hereafter.

No. XXXII.

MATTHEW, v. 5.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

It has been often said all the promises are appropriated. To the poor in spirit God has promised the kingdom of heaven.

What, *meekness* and not *war* gain territory? Meekness is a quietness, mildness and gentleness. It is that spirit of non-resistance enjoined on his disciples by our Lord, when he said, "If any man smite thee on the one cheek turn to him the other also." Some things may seem *like it* but *are not it*. That indecision which has no opinion when those are present who will oppose it, is not meekness but cowardice.

We are directed to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the Saints. We are to be rooted and grounded in the truth. That cowardice which does not defend the truth is not meekness. It is yielding the honor of God because we fear man more than God, because their frown effects more than the threatenings of God.

That tameness which arises from want of talent is not meekness. This differs nothing from what may be found in animals, but meekness is a gospel grace. It implies that the natural temper has been subdued by the power of God so that the Christian spirit operates in the midst of coarse and unhandsome treatment. Paul was not meek by nature but became so by grace. Still his natural temper sometimes broke out—as when the high priest commanded him to be smitten. Meekness implies a sanctified heart. Hence the promise is made to believers that they shall inherit the earth. God will give these good things to those who exhibit the temper that he justifies.

By the earth we are to understand not merely his terrestrial territory but all the good things of the life that now is. Hence the text implies that this world was made for the church of Christ and belongs in the divine estimation to the people of the Saints of the most high God.

I. It was built for the Church. It is said of the Lord Jesus Christ, that “by him were all things created that are in heaven and earth, visible or invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers, all things are created by him and for him.” And it is said of the people of God, “All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas or the world, or life or death, or things present or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things.

II. The government is committed to a mediator in behalf of the Church. God purposes to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God. It was predicted of the child that he should be born, “That the government should be upon his shoulders, his name should be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” We read of a moment when Christ shall deliv-

er up the mediatorial kingdom to the Father; that is, he shall no longer govern the world *as mediator*, having gathered out of it his people and taken them all to heaven with him. Under his government it will be true that though the wicked heap up silver as the dust and prepare raiment as the clay, *he* may prepare it but the just shall put it on and the innocent shall divide the silver.

3. The people of God alone truly enjoy the good things of this life, and they only have the permission of God to use them: they only are blessed of God in their basket and in their store.

They ask and receive the Divine blessing with their meat and drink. They only receive thankfully the Divine bounties, and submit willingly when God afflicts them. To them only is the promise, "all things shall work together for good to them that love God." Hence they only can be cheerful and happy in the possession of the things of time and sense. God requires that the talents he puts into our hands we occupy until he come. He demands the fruit of the vineyard. Every blessing is handed us on the implied condition that we are truly thankful, and use the blessing well. And none do this but the people of God. Hence none have God's leave to *use*, because none can have his leave to *abuse* the bounties of his providence. If men come not with a grateful heart to the table which the Lord, in his providence, spreads for them, I know not in what text they have leave to partake.

4. The promise of the text will be specially fulfilled when the Church shall be spread over the world, and the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. That day, we know, is coming. Then the text will receive its *literal* accomplishment, and the whole soil be held by those who fear and know the Lord. It is promised the Savior, that "the Father will give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession. A promise, perhaps, of no good to them; for it is added, "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, and shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Still a promise exactly to the point I would illustrate, that the whole of this word's territory will one day belong to the Church of Christ.

REMARKS.

1. The subject illustrates that Divine maxim, "He that will save his life shall lose it." Meekness gives up its right, and God gives it back. In the case reported in the history of Solomon, the true mother gives up her part of the child, rather than have it divided.

2. How anti-*evangelical* is a spirit of war and of contention

Not to this spirit, but its opposite, God has promised a boundless territory.

3. How alarmed should men be if they are blessed abundantly with the good things of this life, and are not the children of God, and are not using his bounties to the Divine honor.

4. Would we be, in the truest sense, rich, we see where we must begin our efforts; by subduing our native ferocious warlike spirit, and putting on the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ.

No. XXXIII.

CORINTHIANS XVI. 22.

If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha.

THE man is anathemized, and *ought* to be, who loveth not our Lord Jesus Christ.

I. There are some who do not love our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. This we know from observation.

They have their place, and keep their standing out of the pale of his Church.

2. From the testimony of all who are regenerate.

They choose to be disassociated with the praying multitude who plead at the Savior's feet. The testimony of all the sacramental host, is, that previously to their enlistment on the side of the Lord Jesus Christ, they were his enemies. They preferred a bubble or a straw, to that glorious being who built all worlds. Their language now is:

“Give what thou canst, without thee we are poor,
And with thee rich take what thou wilt away.”

Nothing less will satisfy an immortal soul but God.

3. From the testimony of Scripture.

They say to God, “Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.”

II. They are accursed from the nature of the case.

1. They do not love the highest moral excellence, but love nothing.
2. They cannot love a lower moral excellence, when they do not love a higher.
3. They can find nothing else to love that can make them happy.
4. Christ cannot love them, nor can any holy beings love them but must hate them.

III. They *ought* to be accursed.

1. They curse themselves.
2. They are cursed by their own consciences.
3. God has threatened to curse them. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all the things written in the book of the law to do them. And it will be recollected the law says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," and it will be recollected that all heaven will add to this delightful injunction their *long* and *loud Amen*.
4. Their character is such that they are fitted for nothing but the Divine wrath.

No. XXXIV.

PSALM LI. 14.

Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation : and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

THERE is a very important sense in which men may be charged with blood-guiltiness, and not be guilty of murder in the immediate act.

Parents have so abused their children that they may be charged with their death, without imbruing their hands in their blood, by neglecting their eternal interests. Men are guilty of the blood of their fellow-men, in a spiritual point of light, who contribute in any way to their everlasting undoing.

I. Men are chargeable with blood-guiltiness, who *neglect the atonement* of the Lord Jesus Christ, and continue obstinately to persevere in sin until they lose their own souls. There remaineth in their case no more sacrifice for sins, "but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversary."

II. By *teaching principles* that lead others to trample upon the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus men imbrue their hands in the blood of their fellow-men, and what was said of one of old, will be true in their case: "that man perished not alone in his iniquity."

III. By *setting an example* that leads others to disregard religion and die in their sins. If men follow us, and our path leads them down to perdition, we are guilty of their blood.

IV. By *neglecting to do* for others what might *promote their salvation*, we may become guilty of their blood. "We see the sword coming, and blow not the trumpet." Hence their blood will be in our skirts.

V. By *approving of the character* of men when they have not on the character that the Lord Jesus Christ will approve at his coming, we bring upon ourselves the blood of our fellow-men. "We daub, in that case, with untempered mortar, and sew pillows to all arm-holes."

VI. By *neglecting to pray* for our fellow-men while such are the promises, that would we pray aright, God would save them in answer to those prayers, we bring the blood of our fellow-men upon us. "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins, and will heal their land."

VII. When we see prevailing any iniquities that are destroying the souls of men, and we *hold our peace*, and do not disapprove of those iniquities, we incur blood-guiltiness.

REMARKS.

1. There are several things respecting this blood-guiltiness I wish to name here. *It stains deep.* The vulgar idea that has been current for so many years, that the blood of murder could not be washed out, has arisen from the impressions of guilt such a deed inflicts upon the conscience; otherwise it never had been the impression that the blood of murder could not be washed out as readily as other blood. Blood-guiltiness will adhere long. We

have heard of many a murderer who could never efface the guilt from his conscience, and died finally through iniquity.

2. *It corrodes fearfully.* It is not a slight paroxysm that removes it, when the conscience is corroded with remembered guilt. It is a guilt that wakes up the soul to a deep and dreadful horror. It led one to say, "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation."

3. Christians that have had frequently to do with the destruction of souls ever since they were regenerated, must experience frequently renewed pardons, in order to have permanent peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

4. How certain, then, that the punishment of the finally impenitent *will be endless*, in order to have any relation at all to the deeds they have done. All sinners have been guilty of this deed of blood-guiltiness, and in order to bear in the punishment any relation to the deeds they have done, it can have no limit. Hence said the Psalmist, "Pangs have taken hold of me."

5. How *endlessly involved* must be the last account of ungodly men! One has been the means of damning another, and he another, and he a third, and thus the deed extends to infinity.

6. The *distress that sinners* feel, when they first discover their guilt, *is not to be wondered at.*

7. *O, what a view* this subject gives us of this world's guilty population! We walk the streets of our city with a multitude of murderers, who will have all this train of blood-guiltiness upon them in the last day.

8. Why, then, are we so surprised that *so few are saved, and so many destroyed?* Who ever expected, that among a gang of murderers, the *real mass* would be pardoned!

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE SYRIAN CAPTIVE, OR TRY THE REMEDY.

IN one of the invasions of Syria upon Israel, there was among the captives a little maid whose brief story has always deeply affected my heart. Of her parentage nothing is said, except that she was a daughter of Abraham, and of course a child of the covenant. Her name is found I hope in the Lamb's book of life, but is recorded on no escutcheon hung out from the battlement of the skies: but her deeds were worthy to be written on an angel's wing. In her hand she bore the first torch that lighted up hope in the palace of an idolatrous monarch.

In the dark hour of her captivity I can well imagine the midnight scene, when the ruffian soldiery perhaps broke in upon the slumbers of the dormitory, and disturbed the repose of the cradle, and pierced the spear deep into the father's heart, and waked to a fit of frenzy the doting mother, whose moan filled every breeze, and was wafted back in echoes from every mountain top. Perhaps she clasped her infant to her breast, and fled in consternation and affright, by the light of her blazing habitation; leaving the residue of her family to make the best provision possible for their escape. Perhaps this little daughter cried, "O stay, my mother! why so fast? I cannot keep pace with thy footsteps," when swooning, it may be, she broke at length from her mother's hand, and waked up to misery in the arms of her captor.

How cruel these wars which have every where marched in the van of the gospel, and made desolate the abodes of man, and feasted savage ears upon the wails of the dying, and the shrieks of infancy! She had perchance that evening come from the paschal sacrifice, where she learnt the prophetic story of the Lamb, that was to be offered for the sin of the world on the altar of God; and with sweeter confidence than ever in the protection of Israel's King,

had closed her eyes in peaceful slumbers. But now how sad the change, as she is borne on the way, a helpless captive, to a distant and darkened land. And as she cast a heart-rending look behind,

She wept her father slain; her mother fled;
 All the endearments of the parental roof
 Gone, now gone for ever. And most of all
 The hallowed rites she wept, sweet medium
 Of intercourse 'twixt heaven and earth—rites
 Foreshadowing the coming on of Zion's
 Glorious triumph.
 'And must I never see my mother more,
 Nor thee, thou sweet smiling babe; nor yet thee
 Dearest brother; nor you, ye hills, and vales,
 And fields, and floods, scenes of my joyous childhood—
 Nor yet thee, thou consecrated altar,
 Where my infant vows to Abraham's God
 Were paid? I yield submission to thy will,
 Dark though it be; and when far off my lot
 From the deep centre where dwells this heart
 Of mine, still to thy throne O God, will I
 Direct my prayer.' In lone soliloquy
 Thus she prayed, while on her soul distilled
 From heaven the dews of mercy.

In the division of the spoil this captive maid fell to the share of Naaman, captain of the hosts of Syria; and while she waited on his wife, she told the wondrous story of the prophet that was in Israel. *There dwelt the law of kindness upon her lips*, and in her every action there was a charm that bound those she served in confidence and love. Her master held high rank in royal favor; and in the house of Rimmon, an idol god, had sworn, and kept his vow of fealty to his king; and was the more honored because "God by him had given deliverance to Syria."

How grievous that the God of Israel should be unknown to him who ascribes the victories which he has achieved, and which had placed his name high on the tablet of fame, to his special favor. And how yet more grievous that he should wage war with Israel's prosperity, that he might please an enemy of his holy empire.

But the darkness of pagan idolatry shrouded his mind, while the poor casket that contained it was the prey of a loathsome and consuming disease. "He was a leper." This ancient scourge of sin had broken in upon his camp, and had carried despair to his high hopes and his towering ambition, and *perhaps* his profligacy. From this captive maid he had been told something of Israel's God; had received just enough of light to make darkness visible,

and had gathered some indistinct impression that relief could be obtained from the prophet of Samaria. Oh how could a heathen die that had intimations of the Lamb to be slain, while he had not taken sanctuary in his blood? "Is there, then, a prophet in Israel that can heal the leprosy? Can he have compassion on a stranger, an enemy, the worshiper of another than Israel's God? or is there not a limitation of his power to the descendants of Abraham?" "He can," she replied, "recover thee. He *would*, wert thou *with* him. Oh that my lord were now in Samaria with this prophet who has already had compassion upon a Sidonian widow—a stranger to the covenant of promise; and he surely will not pass unheeded the application of my lord." Her deep solicitude for the welfare of her master led her, perhaps, very often to press the necessity of immediate resort to the remedy provided. Her compassion had been awakened by the view of his wretchedness: for "lo, he was a leper," an exile from his family, a burden to himself; and though high in office and in honor, a loathing to all who beheld him. All fled him, as he walked abroad, lest this frightful curse should be transferred to themselves. All excluded him from their habitations, lest his entering them should bring pollution that could not be cleansed. His nearest relatives, and most intimate associates abandoned him to his own solitary dwelling. They who followed him, as he led the armies of Syria, followed him afar off to prevent contagion. And then he was no less an object of loathing to himself than to others. He abhorred his own flesh. It was rottenness upon his bones. It was a putrid carcass, upon which the vultures longed to prey, bound by ligatures to a living soul. And what seems despair complete, it is a disease *without a remedy*. Death alone—a lingering, solitary death—unpitted, unwept, nay, most earnestly desired both by the victim and his nearest friends—was all that could promise the poor leper a dismal shadow of relief. What an emblem this of moral pollution! How shunned the sinner by all holy beings! Excluded from the abode of righteousness; shut out from hope and happiness, and heaven; odious to himself, forlorn and miserable, his is but a living death, and while he lingers upon the borders of eternity there is nothing before him but "the fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation."

The story of the captive maid was simple because it was true. It touched the heart of her master, and inclined him to seek an interview with the prophet of Israel. The news flew through all the departments of the royal palace. Wonder was excited there, and

hope, and perhaps a council of state was held to deliberate upon this strange intelligence. The king of Syria despatches a letter to Israel's king, and sends Naaman with a retinue and gifts of princely aspect in quest of the promised boon. There was enough of light to inspire confidence; but confidence in dark and blind confusion. The royal favorite hastens with his credentials to the court of Israel's king, who on interpreting the import of the communication—and well he might, it was so strange a suit—attributes it to a wily design on the part of his rival monarch, to involve him in a conflict—a conflict which he dreaded, and which he would gladly shun. He rends his robes in consternation, and the alarm spreads through all his court. And now the prophet's counsel is earnestly implored, as men, in terror for their sins, or in dread of death, apply to some till then unnoticed friend of God, and ask his intercession at the throne of grace on their behalf. The prophet quiets their fears by demanding the Syrian captain to be sent to him; and he would teach him that there was indeed a God in Israel mighty to save. Naaman with his retinue presents himself at the door of the prophet, but chagrined at receiving no personal notice, and vexed with the simple message, "Go wash seven times in Jordan and be clean," turned and went away in a rage. Here like the sinner at the footstool of mercy, all leprous, all defiled; and yet elated with false views of his own consequence in the sight of God, and contemning the simple offer of salvation through the blood of atonement, flies in anger from the only source of relief. But his servants entreated him to try the remedy of the prophet. Perhaps Israel's waters may avail. Haply Abana and Pharpar have no such healing virtues. If he had sent them on a long pilgrimage to some desert land to build a heathen temple and a heathen altar where human foot has never trodden since creation rose, or had he imposed self-inflicted tortures till thou couldst scarcely have borne them, thou couldst have done it all to save thy life. Why not then wash in Jordan? If it do not help, it cannot injure, no harm will follow. He yielded to their wise advice, and went and washed, when lo to his surprise and joy his putrid, loathsome flesh, gave place to that of infant tenderness and purity. In grateful amazement he gazed upon himself and felt life's current careening through his veins as in playful childhood. He had washed the leper off, and swift presents an offering at the prophet's feet. Oh take the price of life and health of thy poor servant, now relieved and happy.

No, thy leprous cleave for ever to thy enemies. Take with

thee thy gifts. It will buy a lamb to offer on the altar of the living God, who healed thee by a power unseen and made thy flesh all young again. So Abraham's God can operate. Oh there is no God like him in all the earth.

Why, prophet, thou hast made me whole; and wilt thou not receive the price of "a Syrian ready to perish" who came in blindness, led by the direction of a little servant maid, or captive from the land of Israel, and found all, and more than all that he had hoped. Take then the boon I offer, else tell me more of Israel's God, whom I would for ever serve.

But wouldest thou know more of Israel's God? 'Twas he who built the heavens, and spread abroad the sea, when all the sons of God shouted for joy. He throws out his gifts in such profusion, and takes no bribe—receives no offering but an humble and a broken heart, through the atoning sacrifice.

Oh give me then some of Israel's soil to build an altar in Syria's empire, that I may worship only him that built the heavens, and bless the God of Abraham that healed the leper, till I come where Abraham is. And one thing more I ask, when I go into the house of Rimmon *because I must*, and then bow, my master hanging on my arm, Oh! hold thy servant guiltless in this one thing.

"Go in peace," and as thou rearest an altar to the living God, inquire there, what he would have thee do. There lay thy case in humble supplication before his throne, and he will guide thee right.

With gladsome heart Naaman bade the holy prophet a kind farewell, and hasted on his way to spread the wonders wrought in Israel amid the camp and court of Syria.

So it seems a captive maid, was the first missionary to a land of gross idolatry. She bore the first torch of light to the camp of Syria, a light which broke in upon the gloom which overshadowed in dense darkness all its habitations, from the palace of the monarch to the tents of his meanest subject. And what may not a little sabbath school child perform in the moral renovation of the world? How many a child trained up in the knowledge of God, has been instrumental in widely extending the praises of the Redeemer, by touching the chord that vibrated from heart to heart, till multitudes upon multitudes were affected by it, and brought to bow at the foot of the cross.

This little maid was but a servant that waited upon her mistress, and yet behold her sympathy for the affliction of her master. Hear her prayer in his behalf. Witness the urgency with which she press-

es the necessity of his immediate and personal application to the prophet that was in Samaria. And so Christian servants are ever blessings in the families where they dwell, and their pious example may be the means of saving their employers.

What an example of rigid adherence to the principles of early education. All the idolatry of the Syrian camp and court did not move her or cause her to forget the God of Israel. The principles which she had imbibed in her childhood clung to her in her captivity, and no temptation could prevail upon her to swerve from the way of righteousness in which she had been instructed. "If I forget thee, Oh! Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning," was the motto which she had inscribed upon her heart. Let the children of pious parents, when far away from parental instruction, remember the story of this captive maid, and inculcate it in the avoidance of all that is evil and in the practice of all that is good.

Let parents train their children so, that should they be called to leave them to the buffetings of this world, they may have a surer, firmer stay than a mere parent's arm, a wiser counsellor, and a far dearer friend.

Ye who have tried the remedy, tell me, did you not find it all, and more than all you hoped for? Was it not a timely and precious remedy? For what price would you have failed in that tremendous hour? Oh, tell, then, and teach your child to tell, in the lodgment where he dwells, or amid the servitude he serves, of that Fountain opened, in the house of David, for sin and all uncleanness. Make the tale familiar to the infant mind, of Him that bled on Calvary, and healeth every wound with his own vital stream. The theme is sweet. We shall talk of it in heaven, and sing of it in the eternal choir which shall be assembled around the throne of God and the Lamb.

But ah, how many hold the plague imbedded deep till life goes out, and will not reach that place, nor sing that song, nor feel that joy in heaven. And when they knew that the remedy was cheap and easy, and the price a grateful heart, was all that was required, oh, the disappointment, and chagrin, and wretchedness, that will prey upon the damned multitude in everlasting fire. Recollection of the *remedy untried* will eat their flesh as doth a canker.

WORLDS SENT OUT TO ILLUSTRATE THE PATH THAT MINDS
SHOULD TAKE.

IN imagination I am sometimes thrown back to the period of creation when God spoke and it was done—when he commanded and it stood fast. And as I am stationed near the throne, and as I hear the order issued, Let there be light—let worlds be formed, and let infinite space welcome these monuments of creating power, I cannot wonder, then, angels should gaze upon the scene with untold amazement, and attune their harps to lofty song. Each sun, each planet, each family of worlds, as it sprung into being, received an impulse from the hand of its Creator, and sped its way into the orbit for which it was destined. And there it revolves in its own sphere, and revolves upon its own axis, and again revolves in blessed union with the whole family of systems, by an arrangement how complete, by an order how harmonious; and by a counterpoise of powers, which at once retains and impels it, how perfect! By the one, it would fly from its orbit, and wing its way for ever from the sphere in which it was stationed; and by the other, it would come into speedy collision with its fellow orb, and then with other orbs, till the ruin of the entire universe should be complete, and the chaos perfect. Oh, how amazing the system of creation! What a theme for song! How it displays the wisdom of the power of the incomprehensible Architect! Had the original impulse been greater or less, had it been differently apportioned, without that wondrous counterpoise which now balances the whole, this fair world of ours might have been whirled beyond the solar influence; might have been wafted into blackness and darkness, and been doomed to perpetual sterility, and perhaps to everlasting winter. But now, curbed and restrained, and its pathway marked out by the finger of God, he reserves it as the theatre for the display of his glory. Creation unfolds to us his wisdom and power; but these constitute only a part of his perfections. Would we discern his justice, his mercies, his grace, his love, we are directed to the cross. This is the sun and centre of a system infinitely more glorious than that which inspired the first anthem of the angelic choir. We can sing of creation as the cradle of our

being ; but Redemption lifts our song to nobler strains. Countless myriads, washed in the blood of the Lamb, will participate for ever in those joys which are unalterable and full of glory, and behold, with unceasing and adoring wonder, the ways and the perfections of God, as unfolded in his everlasting covenant.

I now come to the application of these remarks. The impulse which was given to the world, in the original creation, not unaptly represents the effect of those instructions which are received under the parental roof, in the Sabbath school, and by the ministrations of the sanctuary.

Take, for instance, the Sabbath school teacher, and mark his attitude. He stands the director of immortal minds. He fits them for their destined course, and gives the impulse which propels them in their future orbit—not unerringly—because opposing powers, counteracting influences, a multitude of adverse attractions, all contend for the mastery, and form a mighty combination to impede and divert, and throw off those minds into other circles, where they will flash, and redden, and glare for a while, like wandering stars, and then explode, and be lost in the blackness of darkness for ever. Oh, what an attitude, that gives to a planet its impulse, and wafts it in its orbit, and balances the powers, which, while they curb and rein it within prescribed limitations, urge it on in regular and systematic progression. But the course of planets must cease after a few cycles of years. The whole system of worlds, when they shall have run their round, and answered the purposes of their destination, must perish. Nothing is doomed to live, to survive the general wreck, but the immortal mind. And as the impulse which that mind receives affects it throughout all its future being, oh, how mighty the enterprise, how solemn the responsibility, of giving it a direction which it must feel for ever. Better annihilate a world than impress upon mind a false character, and send it whirling in some irregular or eccentric orbit. Better that the brightest planet that shines should be hurled from its sphere, and sent lawless through the heavens, and be sunk in everlasting night, than for an immortal mind to receive such an impulse as would dash it, with maddening and unhallowed energy, against other minds, and mark its own pathway to ruin by the prostration of other spirits, which are also destined to live for ever. It is not the loss merely of a single soul ; this were but a speck in the account ; it may be a ruined generation. And this ruin may spread in a wider and still wider circumference, and roll on, from generation to generation, with an accelerated impulse, till it

is announced that time shall be no more. But whence its origin? It is traced to some unfaithful teacher in a Sabbath school—to some wrong direction there—the result of some unhallowed impulse, which this same teacher had received from some mistaken guide, and stereotyped to live through all the generations of men, down to the funeral of the world. What then is the attitude of the teacher? How can he take his station at the goal, and give the impulse, without spending a thought upon its amazing results? Every one that he sends forth into the world bears some impress which he has imparted, some character which he has given, and is better or worse, will soar higher in the realms of light, or sink deeper in despair, by having participated in his instructions, and received from him an onward impulse. Oh, that all teachers would remember their responsibility, and strive to send forth their entire classes in spheres of usefulness and duty here, that they may shine hereafter like the “brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever.” And oh, when the teacher shall be able to trace the history of these immortal minds, which he put upon the track, and to know to what extent they have been shipwrecked and foundered, and sunk and lost, through the agency which he has communicated, I can readily conceive how he might wish that he had been a devil, rather than to have occupied the fearful position of a teacher of a Sabbath school, and there betrayed his trust.

I think this subject susceptible of still further illustration, from the various disposition of the worlds which God has made, the laws by which they are governed, the order in which they move, and the wondrous adjustments by which they are perfectly balanced in all their relative positions, and roll on, each in its course, and each contributing to the interest and harmony of the amazing whole. In imagination I have supposed, perhaps quite presumptuously, the throne of the Eternal to be the very centre of the universe, around which all worlds, and systems of worlds, perpetually revolve. And as my mind ranges from this centre, through the fields of illimitable space, it lights upon an untold multitude of objects that fill it with amazement. The number of these heavenly orbs, their varied magnitudes, their respective distances from each other, and from the common centre, and systems upon systems, beyond the computation of Angelic powers; each with a centre of its own, yet each chained to all the rest with unseen but indissoluble bands, and all obedient to the impulse which first sent them careering in their respective orbits. Oh, what a theme for the most enlarged, and delightful, and profound contemplation!

I love to lose myself in the immensity of the works of God, and unite with the devout Psalmist in singing, "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy hand, and the moon and the stars that thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou shouldst visit him?"

But there is a grand centre in the *moral* as well as in the *physical* universe. In the revolutions of worlds, you will mark that no one stands in another's way—no one takes another's path—no one envies another its nearness or its remoteness from the throne, and none is displeased that others should have larger dimensions than they, or move in a more extended orbit, or shine with a more resplendent splendor. There is no collision between these heavenly orbs—no interference—no discord. What a lesson to the Church, and to the world! The grand fountain of impulse and attraction to the moral system, is God. The great love wherewith he loved the world, is the central influence which impels to every proper feeling, and every noble action. The love of God is the golden chain which binds together all the heavenly hosts; and as it is let down to earth and embraced by men, it unites the Church Militant, and the Church Triumphant, and the Angelic Choir, in one blessed and harmonious fraternity. The manifestation of the love on the part of God, is in the gift of his Son. He is the centre of the entire system. His Spirit, as in the original creation, first moulded, and then threw into their respective spheres, all who can lay any just claim to the endeared and ennobling appellation of saints. They bear His blessed image. They shine by His light. They move by his power, and, receiving their impulse from Him, they are borne onward with the greater velocity the nearer their approach to the throne. A brighter light also gilds their path, and a more dazzling glory. And oh, that the path of all were that of the just, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day!

But some Christians, with very eccentric orbits, will play the comet. Now they approach the centre of attraction, with amazing rapidity. They are the subjects of universal wonder: what a train marks their flight! What apprehensions are exerted lest they should come within the earth's attractions, as they do within its orbit, and burn up the world! And who knows but some comet may be commissioned to fulfil the decree of heaven, respecting the final consummation of all things? But they soon pass away, and as they recede, the light which they emit grows fainter, until they are lost to the vision, and are lost for years and for centuries, ere they return to excite wonder and apprehension afresh. So

with Christians, who dazzle and glitter and carry with them a train for a little season, and then fly off and abscond, and are forgotten. The unequableness of their movements, affords just cause for apprehension, lest they should prove wandering stars, to whom is reserved the mist of darkness. The alternations of intense heat and intense cold, how very uncomfortable! How the one completely unnerves the soul, while the other locks up its energies in the frosts of winter!

Other Christians, like planets, move in eccentric orbits; but in orbits slightly eccentric. They shine brighter, and are borne onward with greater rapidity at one period, than at another; yet not to such an extent as to elicit very marked attention. There is a regularity, and an order, and a harmony in all their movements, beautiful for simplicity, and commanding veneration; and as planets have a centre around which they revolve, so has the Christian; and Christians are moreover centres of influence and attraction to others. No one liveth to himself, and no one dieth to himself. No one is so feeble, or so insignificant, or so isolated, as to render his existence and character of no effect. He is the subject of influence. He exerts an influence, just as the earth attracts the moon, and the moon the earth. The system of nature, how beautiful, how harmonious! But not more so than the Christian system, in which justice and mercy meet together, and righteousness and peace embrace each other. And when Christianity shall be thoroughly established in the hearts of all; when its principles shall be thoroughly understood by all; and when its high and holy motives shall influence all, what a blessed concert there will be of feeling, of heart, and of action. There will be no collision, no strife, no discord—Ephraim will not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim. All will move on in harmony around their respective centres of influence, in larger or more limited spheres; and all will move on around the great sun and centre of the moral system, the Lord Jesus Christ, impelled by one motive—the love of God; and having only one theme for the employment of their harps through all the ages of eternity. And thus the great love wherewith he hath loved us, and given himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity.

CAN THINE HEART ENDURE AND THINE HANDS BE STRONG.

No one has ever deliberately calculated on the horrors of everlasting abandonment. O! who can endure it? With what dark images does it haunt the soul? No ray of light—no gleam of hope breaks in upon the prison of despair. It is all darkness—all misery—all hopelessness. The worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. *The darkness* of perdition, alas! who can bear it? It is so fearful, so intense, so gloomy, so ceaseless. It is the gathering storm which increases in blackness—the total eclipse which shuts out all light for ever: the deep dungeon which immures the soul in eternal midnight. “The mist of darkness”—“The blackness of darkness,” “outer darkness,” are terms denoting the imagery which shadows forth the world of perdition. Oh! who can dwell for ever shut out from light? How appalling that dark abyss, where there is no sun, no moon, no twinkling star, no coming morn, no future day,—that “land of darkness as of darkness itself,” where there is no order, no prospect, no object of vision, nothing but the dense cloud of bottomless gulf! the terror of such darkness how inexpressibly great! And yet it is but a faint image of what the soul in perdition must endure for ever.

The shame of being lost, how insupportable! The slow finger of scorn as it points to the guilty outcast from God. Oh, who can bear it? Where will the sinner hide from the shame of his nakedness? Where will he fly from himself or conceal any longer his hidden iniquities, now that the refulgent glory of the eternal throne exposes to the noon-day gaze all the abominations which he has ever committed? He gathers up, perhaps his mantle of self-righteousness, and folds it around him, but alas, it is all filthiness and rags. He is ashamed to wear it. He resorts, perhaps to a variety of expedients to preserve some shreds of a reputation, to which he is tenderly alive, but it only renders more signal his exposure, and doubles his shame. He is ashamed of the ruin which he has purchased by his iniquities. He is ashamed of the unholy influence which he has exerted, ashamed of the obliquity which is poured upon him, ashamed of his companions in guilt, of his associates in crime, ashamed to look up to that world of light which he might have inherited—ashamed to see the saints in glory

there : ashamed that he heard not his Father's voice, that he fled not when he might, to the Savior's arms, and thus he yielded not, when the spirit strove to his renewing, and sanctifying and saving grace. The loss of Heaven, how shameful, how unnecessary, criminal, vile, irretrievable ; and the greater the shame, because lost in the indulgence of those passions which not only degrade their possessor, but render him an object of universal loathing and contempt. Contempt is then coupled with shame. Oh, who can bear contempt ? We shun it as an adder that biteth. But the portion of the wicked will be " shame and everlasting contempt."

The *desertion* of the world of death, how terrible ! The solitary cell, how gloomy ! But this is the dungeon of dungeons. Alone, shut out from all society and shut up to his own dismal reflections, and there for ever, with none to whom he can unburthen his soul ; with none into whose ear he can pour the sad tale of his woe ; with none to whom he can confess his crimes, and thus roll off a fraction of that intolerable load of anguish under which he is crushed. What a lonely, deserted state ; how unspeakably overwhelming ! In that land of shadows and of " darkness as darkness itself," " friend, lover, and acquaintance" is far away ; and the sinner strides his despairing track, an eternal stranger to all the sympathies of family, all the endearments of social intercourse, all the fond recollections of home—once sweet home—but now deserted of all its charms ; himself deserted, nay, himself the essence of eternal desertion ; shunned by his former companions ; abandoned by heaven and hope ; and left to wend his solitary way in still deeper desertion, through the long track of endless night. The desertion of damnation, how intolerable ! It is the bitterest ingredient in his woe.

The *passions developed* and perfected in the lost, how terrible ! Who can stand before *envy* ? Oh how the sinner will envy the saints in light ! Their sweet songs, their golden harps, their joys unutterable and full of glory, their robes of spotless purity, are all materials for the corrosion of his envy, for the gnawings of that worm that never dies. *Jealousy*—the most cruel and unrelenting of all the passions, will there find full scope. All the fires of hell cannot burn it out. The floods of perdition cannot drown it. There will be *malice* and *pride* and *revenge* and *vanity*. All the base passions will be awake, and wrought up to the utmost intensity of action. " Hatred and variance and emulation and strife," sources of discord and vexation and war and carnage, are made to bear in

terrible concentration upon the centre of the heart. Their smoke will be as Sodom, and their stench as Gomorrah.

The *misery* of being lost, how inexpressible! "Who can dwell with the devouring fire? Who can lie down in everlasting burnings?" Who can endure the gnawings of the deathless worm? The sublimest of uninspired poets has said,—

"Me miserable! which way shall I fly
 Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?
 Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell!
 And in the lowest deep, a lower deep
 Still threatens to devour me; opens wide
 To what the hell I suffer seems a heaven."

It is misery, without relief, without hope, without limits; perpetually increasing, and yet with powers perpetually strengthened to bear accumulated woe. It is a wrath to be revealed, and ever to be without cessation, without abatement. Oh might hope enter into the dark mansion, might its guilty inmates indulge the prospect of annihilation, at any period, ever so remote; might some ponderous rock grind them to powder, or might one drop of water be applied to their parched tongues, what a luxury! How would it mitigate the horrors of despair, and render less intolerable the abode of the damned! But when they cry, How long, and are answered, *Forever*; and when again they raise their cry, How long? and the pit echoes, *Forever*; when rocks and mountains melt down and leave them. Oh how naked, without a covert from the vengeance which they have incurred! And when their perpetual blasphemies provoke even the divine endurance, what have they to anticipate as the reward of their deeds, but indignation and anguish, tribulation and wrath! As the guilt of the lost will for ever increase, so, side by side, their despair. But what a faint image can we have of misery to be endured for ever, to increase for ever, and to be borne as the just demerit of accumulated sins for ever! As I draw near in imagination, and hear the blasphemies of the pit, the accent breaks in upon me, Oh that God would die! But he is the living God; and to be in his hands, will finish the soul's despair!

A BETTER CHURCH WILL MAKE A BETTER WORLD.

It was predicted of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament Scriptures, that "Prayer also shall be made for him." The world might then have been prepared to see and say, that whatever other means God might use, in reinstating his Son in the empire promised him, extending from sea to sea, and from the river to the end of the earth—whatever other means he might use, he will not dispense with *Prayer*. The very spirit that is to vindicate his rights in this revolted world, is a spirit of prayer and supplication. His people will appeal to himself, after they have made, and while they are making, their appeal to men.

And the Christian has learned the secret of prayer, and loves the duty. If the kingdom would rise and grow without his prayers, he would not be willing. He can go at any hour, with any cause that lies upon his heart, and plead that cause in the court of heaven. The very nature of the new birth, and the relationship it has established between him and his exalted Redeemer, has won his heart for ever to that interest that was paramount in the heart of the dying Lamb of God. Hence all his followers love the same interest, and cannot be willing to be denied the privilege of pushing it forward by their prayers. As was said of the converted Apostle, "Behold he prayeth," and as he thus gave evidence of a new birth, so every Christian loves to pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven, Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

This is a part of the work in which he will not be willing to be denied a share. It is the very work for which his new birth has prepared him. He could spend his life at the throne, and would die there. And God loves to hear him pray, and may sometimes withhold the blessing he was about to give, till he has drawn out the soul in prayer, "Oh, my dove, thou art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs; let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." And when he prays, "Thy kingdom come," he but asks God to do what he has promised, and purposed to do. Hence, how free of access is the throne of mercy! how sweet the privilege and urgent the duty of going to God, burdening the heart with the interests of his own kingdom and glory.

Here the work of erecting the spiritual temple lies open to as many builders as will touch it with their hands, or bear it on their minds. Every heart that has benevolent and holy desires, may urge the work along, the very work for which the world rolls and time endures. And shame on that believer who will not apply his energies, and would be willing to let the temple rise, if it might, without his help.

There is one consideration that it would seem must arouse the most paralyzed to action at this moment. God is shaking the world from the very revolution prayed for, and promised. Numerous signs mark this as the commencement of the age we have been looking for. I hardly know where to begin to enumerate these signs. The bonds of despotism are lessening, that men may be at liberty to put on the yoke of Christ. Almost every arm that ever wielded a sceptre, or controlled a conscience, is unnerved. The oppressed are rising upon their oppressors, and trampling their ensigns in the dust. The miseries of the world have been uncovered to the gaze of the Church. We have sent out, and have taken a gauge of the disasters to be alleviated. We know how many millions are without the gospel, and how desolated their territory without heavenly light; and we know too how fearful the wastes of our cities, and in all parts of our lands, and how wide the havoc which the god of this world is spreading among its population. This is no doubt the very age of the world when its people know their own present history; and God is evidently preparing instruments for some mighty change in the world's condition. He has awakened the Church in some measure to a sense of her responsibilities, and she has set her guards on her distant ramparts. There is going on an organization of the Lord's hosts that must soon enlist all their energies, and open every embrasure, and marshal every phalanx that can be mustered for the onset upon the powers of darkness. The child that can carry a tract, or breathe a prayer, or bequeath a penny, can now move some spring that touches the interests of redemption. Some skirt of the wide harvest reaches to our very doors, and, if we can only lift a sickle, we can thrust it in and reap. It is now easy to be useful.

And what is, again, a sign of the times worthy of notice; many ungodly men are convinced that now is the time to secure heaven or it is lost for ever. They are ever bending to listen to the voice of mercy, lest, before they are safe, its voice should die away for ever upon their ear. They are urged by some kind of motive to offer

themselves as candidates for the kingdom of God, and are coming as near as may be, to the line of demarkation between the two kingdoms, hoping, as it would seem, that some extraneous impulse may force them over that line, and they shall live.

And there is another class of ungodly men; who are bracing themselves against any means that may promise their awakening. They fear they shall have to become Christians. They dare not trust themselves where any extra means are used. Thus do we seem to see evident indications that this is the age of mercy, long predicted; and if the Christian does not devote himself entirely to the Lord, just when he sees the evident signs of his coming, what will move him? There can be before the mind, but one absorbing interest, that must interest all the energies of the soul. How much afraid, should we then be, if we do not feel for this interest, if we are not ready to bring forward every energy we can summon to the help of the Lord against the mighty. The call is so loud, the field so wide, the reward so glorious, how can any one be idle? As the patriot will plunge in among his country's foes in a favored hour, and sell his life as dear as may be, in doing the foe some signal damage, so must every child of God be willing to carry with him into the field, where he would win souls, the dearest and the entire interests of his heart, his all. If he die in the conflict, or be made poor, or suffer reproach, no matter, if Jesus be honored and souls redeemed. He will have his reward, and his Master the honor. There must be a better Church, or the kingdom of this world can never be given to our Lord according to the promise, by the means specified.

Christ will employ his people in re-possessing himself of the kingdoms he died to redeem. The work befits their relationship to Christ—is the very work which the hope of heaven has qualified them to do; the work most friendly to their sanctification, and for which the Savior will love to reward them—a work that God will not do without his people.

The Lord Jesus, then, must have a Church that will obey him; and he will have, as the latter day glory draws nigh, a Church prepared to live for him, and labor for him, and die for him. There can be no doubt but such will be the character of the Millennial Church. And if any now in the visible kingdom, cannot wake their hearts to this tone of Christian enterprize, they had better die, and commit their interests to another to occupy for the Lord till he come. He manifests himself resolved to have a laborious Church, that through their agency he may push his conquests till

the world is redeemed. And when he has such a Church, the conquest would be easy. As the holy Martyn aroused all Persia, and led a nation of the deceived and destroyed to inquire after the "Man of God," so in every part of the Church, will men arise who will restore her dormant energies, and pour upon her slumbers a note of holy remonstrance that shall quicken every heart that ever beat with spiritual life, and the Church shall slumber no more till her Lord has come. Amen, even so, come Lord Jesus, come quickly.

And now, beloved in the Lord, a poor sinner addresses this plea to you, who hopes and will try to pray that God may use it in rendering you a better Christian than you ever have been. You see the broad ground I have taken. I consider you and all that you have, as the Lord's. I have supposed you willing, soon as you know your duty, to do it, and have endeavored to make you acquainted with it. You will show yourself to be a true disciple of your Master, by giving yourself to him—your mind and body. Your power to speak, and reason, and write; and in all the ways wherein you can, you will do him honor. You will give him your influence, your money, your children, and all your house—you will pray for Zion, and weep for her, and toil for her, and live and die for her. You will try to begin the Millenium in your own house, and first of all in your closet; and will never rest while there is an ungodly soul within the reach of your influence, and then you will not rest while there is one in the world. You will not be satisfied with being what you have been, and doing what you have done. You acknowledge that you have never been enough like Christ, and will try and keep trying, till you die to be more like him. Soon as you have read this address, you will fall on your knees and pray that God will bless it to your soul, and then that he will bless it to others. You will renew your covenant with God, and give him all that you have, and all that you are; all that you never have before given him, and all that your heart may even now grudge to give him. From this time onward till you die, you will ever make it your business to save a perishing world? If such is now the purpose of your heart, why not write your name at the bottom of such a resolve, and just consider it the covenant you now make with God, and place it where you can see it every day! And whenever you pray over this covenant, pray for all those who have signed it as you have; that you and they may be *Millenial Christians*, and honor your Master in efforts to save a lost and ruined world.

IF WE HAD A BETTER CHURCH WE SHOULD HAVE A BETTER
WORLD.

It has sometimes been suggested, by the unbelieving heart, that the Church is too *small* to put forth the mighty influence, and exert the control that God requires of it.—“Ye are the salt of the earth.” But when we have summed up the kingdoms, and nations, and tongues, and people to be settled, and seen the smallness of the Church that is to constitute the salt. When we raise the number of the former to eight, or nine, or ten millions, and dwindle away the count of the other, till it drops to a few hundred thousands, and seems almost to terminate in nothing, it would seem as if God had lain upon this little Church a work such as the taskmasters of Egypt laid upon the little handful of Israelites, when bid to make the bricks that built their mighty pyramids without straw. Must, then, this little Church send out the Bible that must civilize, and the ministry, and the ordinances, and the institutions, that must render obedient, and believing, and dutiful, this mass of total and unqualified moral death? Here unbelief cannot refrain its dissent. Why did God give that little band a fatigue duty, so beyond its powers and its prowess? The answer of faith is, *There is Church enough.*

Her power is not to be computed by her numbers. All her conflicts are secured by that promise, “One shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight.” Hence her song may be, in the midst of the battle, “The Lord of hosts is with us, the mighty God of Jacob is our refuge.”

It has always been easy for the Lord to save by many or by few, and it is only unbelief that has ever been afraid. When Gideon's thirty thousand were marshalled on the field of conflict, and the captain of the Lord's host reviewed them, his answer was, “They are too many.” When he had reduced them down to three hundred, and they must meet the hosts of Midian, then he permitted them to escape their assault, and the victory was easy. If Gideon had gone up to battle with his thirty thousand, it might have been doubted whether the Lord of hosts was with them, and the victory might have been ascribed to some god of the hills, or to some superior skill in tactics, that Israel must have learned in Egypt, or in the wilderness.

“Ye are the light of the world;” but must the whole mass of Egyptian darkness, that broods upon the fields of the apostacy be illuminated by the little rush-light that was lit up two thousand years ago on Moriah, and has not shot out its light even yet over more than two or three of the nations? And this little Church, it seems, must reflect this little rush-light over all the nations, or the darkness that broods upon them becomes the blackness of darkness for ever. So inquires unbelief; but faith answers, *There is light enough*. Heaven will spread its broad reflector over this rush-light, and it will shine unto all the nations, and will travel on from the rising morning to the west, and be reflected from the river to the ends of the earth. When Luther rose in Germany, who could have believed that his little fly-light would scorch out the Pope, and burn on till it should dazzle into blindness the whole gang of Cardinals that propped his ghostly empire. And this Church, through the multiplying moral reflectors that God has provided, the power of letters, the invention of printing, and the influence of the press, will throw this light in broad and lucid sheets over all the nations, till their salvation shall go forth like a lamp that burneth. Soon as the Church shall be properly organized, and shall know her strength, and shall have counted up her resources, she will find that her strength and resources are sufficient for the enterprise, and the worst work will be done.

And then we must never forget that the Church needs but few leaders, and that few are employed to draw out all her strength. If there be fewer, still she would have no less strength. If they were more numerous, some, who are now conspicuous, would be thrown into the background; and some that are last would be first; but the Church would be no stronger.—There is just Church enough. And, besides, the Church can display more strength as soon as her interest shall require that display. She can fill up the ranks of her ministry as soon as her Leader shall give the command. There are men enough educated already, and can be called in from other fields as soon as the Lord shall have need of them; and we can educate many thousands more at the Lord’s bidding, in a very few years, and pour upon the Church, and upon the world, a host of laborers to reap the whitening harvest. All this can be done in time to have the millennium open during the present century; so that the seven thousandth year of the world shall be its Sabbath, and the kingdoms of this world then become the kingdoms of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And, moreover, the Church can so increase her energies as to

quadruple her strength in a few weeks. Let God pour out his Spirit upon her sons and her daughters, and produce a revival in every field of her labor! and we see in a moment how her armor shall brighten, and her resources multiply beyond all human computation. And all this can be as soon as the Church is ready to use her strength. When the walls of Jericho must fall, there will not be wanting army enough to begirt her accursed territory. Our fears about the number of the sacramental host are all ill-timed. There will be more when more are wanted. When the Church shall wish to spread out the wings of her host, till they shall begirt the world, a little one shall become a thousand, and a strong one a great nation. When Elisha was pent up in Jothan, and the hosts of Syria spread over all the hills, and covered, with their horses and their chariots, the whole territory of idolatry, and unbelief, cried out, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" Faith could easily climb the hills and see them all glaring, with the horses and chariots of fire. And the prophet was as safe as if heaven's Chieftain had sent his whole life-guard to protect the man of God. Well might he sing, as he let the blinded Syrian into Samaria,—The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels. And well add, by way of chorus—The Lord is among them.

"FIFTEEN MINUTES BEFORE THE TIME."

If there is any one principle to which the formation of my character has been chiefly indebted, it is this motto of a distinguished naval commander. Nobody ever waited for Lord Nelson. He made it an invariable rule to be present at any appointment, and to be ready for every enterprise, at least fifteen minutes before the time, and to wait rather impatiently the arrival of the moment allotted for action. When the hour had fully come, and the delay of others rendered it inexpedient to proceed, he looked upon his own obligation as cancelled, withdrew immediately from the place of rendezvous, and no inducement could ever prevail upon him to return.

The lesson inculcated by this motto, is to be in time for every duty. It should be the standard principle of every man, who has any regard to those with whom he acts, to be truly punctual to all his

engagements. To himself it is a rule of incalculable importance, and applies to every occupation and every pursuit. The ancients represented time under the similitude of an old man, with a single lock upon his forehead, gravely, but steadily approaching an assembled multitude—and whoever seized this lock, and held him by it, was born onward with the most assured pledge that could be given, of future success. But if any suffered him to pass them, he spread the wings, which till then, were concealed behind him and flew away with a rapidity, which rendered pursuit utterly vain. Hence the homely adage, “Take time by the forelock.” Better be fifteen minutes too early than one too late. Too late! Alas what a crowd of sensations cluster round that ill-omened phrase! The disappointments how numerous! The disasters how sad! The consequences, Oh! who can trace them, as they reach through all future time, and embosom themselves in the abyss of eternity.

The importance to one’s self of being before the time, may perhaps be more closely illustrated by an example. I have in my eye a young man who was my classmate in College. There was nothing in the structure of his mind or in its development peculiarly striking. It seemed to me a mind cast in the ordinary mould, with no stamp upon it of either genius or brilliancy. But I marked the regularity with which he attended upon all the duties of the Institution. He was ever before the time in the chapel, the recitation room, the Society’s hall, or whatever else there was a just claim upon his merit and attention. Nor did he ever offer as an excuse, that he was unprepared for any exercise to which he was properly called. He took time by the forelock, and had his lessons all thoroughly digested long before the hour of recitation arrived. His essays were all written, a week in advance of the time when he was expected to read, and as leisure offered, he would frequently after re-model and re-write them. He left nothing to be done at the eleventh hour; but carried out the principle of punctuality into every thing that concerned him.

The result was, he left many of his class lagging behind, while he pressed onward with increasing energy, and making every day a sensible increase to his stock of knowledge. He was at last graduated with a distinction which he had not hoped to attain. And without entering into the minute particulars of his after life, suffice it to say that he became a minister of the everlasting Gospel, where he carried out this same principle in his preparations for the sanctuary—in his family, in his parochial visitations, and in the meetings of Ecclesiastical counsels.

Whoever else was behind the time, with him there was one un-deviating rule. He was never tardy—never unprepared. And by this means he acquired that vigor of thought, and energy of style, and pathos of utterance, so essentially requisite to distinguished usefulness, as a herald of the cross. There was nothing tame, or imbecile, or common-place in any of his efforts. To *himself* then, his habit of punctuality was amazingly useful; and not less so to others, than to himself. This example has had a powerful influence in producing a similar habit among all who were within its range. Nor has he failed to impress the duty by those arguments, which every ingenuous mind will admit to be unanswerable. What right have I to cause a number of men, whom I have engaged to meet at a particular hour, not only to waste their time, but become impatient and fretful by my delay? I rob them of that which I never can restore—the precious hours thus worse than wasted. I set them a pernicious example—I betray an important trust—I tantalize with the sensibility of those whom I am bound to respect and cut off a portion of their usefulness. In an individual case, which I have occasioned, may be small, but in the aggregate the amount exceeds belie.

Let me select another instance of a different character, to illustrate the principle. Our funeral solemnities, it is too well known, are seasons of great and tantalizing delay. When the appointed hour arrives, the undertaker is not there, or the hearse is not there, or the minister is not there—or some of the pall-bearers, or mourners, or attendants, or friends are absent—there is nothing in readiness for the solemnity. And not unfrequently, a single individual keeps hundreds in waiting, not merely minutes, but hours after the allotted period for commencing the solemnities. And who does not know that such delays are calculated, more than any thing else, to unfit the mind for receiving any favorable impression from the spectacle of mortality, whose obsequies are celebrated? How many have wished themselves away before the services began; and how many have fled from the scene, as soon as they could decently do it, in anger that they were thus duped of the time that should have been devoted to other duties? It is on this account that the generality of funerals utterly fail of producing any good effects. Let *punctuality* be observed by those who have the management of these solemnities, and they will oftener prove, what they are intended to be, salutary lessons to the living.

In conclusion, I will only remark, that the period is rapidly approaching, when the feast to which we are all invited, will be ready;

and should our preparation be delayed till the door is shut, our exclusion will be final and for ever. My soul shudders at the thought of being an outcast from God—of dragging out an eternal and miserable existence an exile from my Father's house!—And I would employ the brief residue of my days in diligent, and active, and persevering efforts to escape from so fearful a result. For none can be too soon or too well prepared, as the night is far spent, and the day is at hand. I would awake, and array myself in the righteousness of Christ, and be ready to meet him at his coming; for he will not tarry beyond the allotted hour. And then it will be said, and finally said, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still."

GOSPEL POLITENESS THE ALLY OF HEAVEN.*

Do not the forms of politeness interfere with Christian fidelity? I ask this question in consequence of a case known of a minister, who at the first interview, sat down by the conscience of a sinner, and pressed it pungently with divine truth: I know not what was the result, except that it was well received. This interview was made the subject of conversation, when one remarked, that he had known a similar case, when the individual's serious impressions were entirely effaced by the abruptness of manner in which the subject of religion was introduced; and that it was quite certain, in his mind, that much more injury than good was the result of such attacks.—But, after all, I thought it very questionable whether the injury supposed was a reality. The apparently unpropitious interview may yet prove to be propitious; and the individual may, at some future time, be brought into the kingdom of God by that very effort. When the harpoon of the whaleman has taken full effect, the mighty monster of the sea flies and flounders and plunges and struggles, with an energy that nothing but a death wound could have inspired. So the very stab of truth that transfixes the conscience, and brings the sinner to lie tamely as a lamb at the foot of the cross, is often preceded by convulsions and throes that

* Contributed anonymously to a religious paper.

resemble death itself. I have seen a man quit the sanctuary in a rage, and refuse to bow at the domestic altar, and avow infidelity, and become a bold blasphemer, while the truth was fixing his barbed arrows in his soul. The result of the whole is, the Spirit of God is now constraining him to meet his naked heart alone. "Sharp arrows of the Mighty, with coals of juniper," were drinking up his spirit; and he made himself desperately angry, to keep himself from being terribly afraid. But, in cases of this kind, what is the frequent, and very desirable effect? I remember one who threatened his wife that if she went to make a profession of religion, he would have the oven heated against her return, and throw her in. She went:—he gathered the fuel; he kindled the fire; and while the oven was heating, he became terribly alarmed, and when she came back she found him on his knees in an agony of despair, imploring mercy; and she knelt with him and joined in the prayer. It was his determined resolve to carry his rash threat into fearful execution; but he was overpowered by the Spirit of God, and his paroxysm of rage was exchanged for tears of contrition. All this was but a struggle of his conscience against the truth of God, applied by the agency of the Spirit. Often, the very thing we ought to do must offend, if it does not result in salvation; and if it do thus result, it is a result that arises often from the very offence. Our motto should be that of the orator who was pleading an unpopular measure, and when one came to cut him down, he calmly said, "Strike, but hear me!"

Oh, what a pity, and what a grief, that Christian parents do not keep their families so familiar with this subject, both before and after conversion, that we may approach them without ceremony, and as readily inquire into the health of their souls as their bodies! How much time would thus be saved; and, what is far more, how many a word might be spoken that would reach the conscience and sanctify the heart, which is not said, because the laws of politeness forbid it. "Oh, tell it not in Gath; publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the Philistines rejoice; lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph!" Shall we care so much about the rules of politeness as to lose the chance of saving the soul? If your house were in flames at a midnight hour, must we go through all the forms of genteel vexation—ring the bell and wait the tedious process of an announcement—before we communicate to you the alarming intelligence? If your child was drowning, might we not make an abrupt effort to save it from a watery grave or even bid the dog do it? Or if your child was seized

with some fatal disease that required the immediate application of a known remedy, might we not administer it without going through all the forms of painful ceremony? One father, at least, wishes to be understood, that he throws his family open to the approach of the ministers of religion, and fears no ill consequences from the abruptness of manner in which they may approach them with the message of salvation. Oh, seize them! bring the truth into close and burning contact with their consciences; and give them no rest day nor night, till they rest on the sufficiency of the atonement, and are joyful in the presence of the King! He wishes to meet them all in heaven, and that none of them may be missing when the Lord Jesus Christ maketh up his jewels. But he is afraid that in this desire he will fail if the forms of politeness are suffered to interfere with ministers in the discharge of their duty. He remembers with pleasure one city which was visited with a powerful effusion of the Spirit; and then it was, that the word of divine truth was not embarrassed by any such restraints. You could go any where, and speak to any one without ceremony on the concerns of the soul, and he would listen to you with deep and thrilling interest. And the result was, that the work of God pervaded every street, and its influence was seen in many families in that beloved city. And he longs for the return of another season so joyous, so full of interest, and of such unspeakable blessings to multitudes of immortal souls. But he can not look for it when and where and while these impediments stand in the way of reaching the conscience, which should be made of easy access to those who would ply it with truth and fit it for heaven.

DUPLICITY.

“ O what a goodly outside falsehood hath.”

To seem to be what one is not, is base.

Duplicity I can't and wont forgive.

When man is not sincere with fellow man,

And would betray him with love's sacred tokens,

The smile, the warm right hand, th' embrace and kiss,

O then I hate my species, hate the name

Of man, and hate myself if this I've done.

I can most willingly endure rebuke,

The coarsest. To my face a man may play

The very boor, and still I can forgive ;

May call me every name that is uncouth,

And make me, if he please, the veriest fiend,

If still ingenuous, if bold and manly ;

Will let me see, and hear him, all the while ;

I then know *who* he is, and *what* ; can tell

Him all my heart, and perchance make him feel,

That he's the very wretch, and thinks the thoughts,

And does the deed, he fathers upon me.

Or one may arm himself with spear and dirk,

May in the onset act the bloody Turk,

If he but *show his arms*. I there can meet

NOTE.—These few poetical productions of Mr. Clark are here inserted merely as specimens of his style, and to exhibit his versatility of talent. Most of them have appeared in the periodicals, for which they were originally prepared. He seems not to have written poetry except when deeply impressed with some matter of peculiar interest. Towards the close of his life, when he was unable to write, he frequently dictated to his daughter passages of uncommon strength and beauty. Those productions were seldom finished. His mind would act with great vigor for a little time, and then he would lose sight of his subject, and break off, exhibiting in the most affecting manner his consciousness of his own imbecility.

The following stanza, the last he ever composed, shows the state of his mind, at that period of his life.

“ I long to trace my footsteps back
And learn the traits of mind I lack,
And gird my mind for future flight
In darkness, or in shades of night.”

Him, can present my shield before his thrust,
 And parry off the stroke that would destroy me.
 The very pirate dark in bloody deeds,
 The curse of all lands, may approach my back,
 And play his game, if he but hoist his flag,
 And warn me I'm to meet with pirate's play.
 Yes, I can fearless lay my shield aside,
 And meet, with bosom bare, the prowess, frank,
 That dares to show its steel, and give me time
 To unsheath mine : I am then no coward.
 But the base wretch that smiles but to betray,
 Who asks me of my health, would know my cares,
 Draws out my tale of woe, and proffers sympathy ;
 Deals off kind language in a tearful dress ;
 And all the while he hates me cordially,
 And means but to betray and injure me ;
 Turns all my doling into basest crime,
 And leaves me but to circumvent and ruin me !
 That man I've not the meekness to forgive.
 Would he not do less harm if all would shun him,
 Just as we do the viper and the asp ?
 I want base names to call him ; he's a wretch,
 A miscreant, a thief, a dark assassin,
 A dog, a wolf, and bites before he barks.
 He ought to have a lair with beasts of prey,
 And growl like them. Yes, in my soul I think
 That claws, and tusks, and hoofs, and horns, far more
 Than speech, and tears, and smiles, would well become him.
 O who can see the gifts of God perverted ?
 What were tongues made for ? Merely to beguile !
 Why the face formed for smiles ? To deal deceit !
 Were tears, as in the sea-maid, and the panther,
 Bestowed but to be used as a decoy ?
 Were faces made to wear a thousand forms,
 And each a lying index of the heart ?
 Must a creating God be thus insulted ?
 Why all the kind civilities of life ?
 That man more easily may seize his prey !—
 To be the engine of malicious purpose !—
 That man may not be safe unless alone !—
 To make our race more wretched than the fall has !—
 To make the world a desert ! This the purpose ?

O, give me then a lodge in some deep glen,
 Amid the polar or the Alpine snows,
 Where shines not sun, nor moon, nor stars, nor torch ;
 Where reigns eternal frost, and cold, and night ;
 Where p owls the bear, where screams the owl,
 And panther ; lives every fowl of prey ;
 Where frowns the pendant rock, and glaciers wild,
 Where hang, suspended by a breath, the avalanche ;
 I would far sooner court the eagle's grasp,
 Associate with vultures, or the white bear,
 Could cov'nant with the tempest and the whirlwind,
 Could be where dwells one long eternal silence,
 Or wrestle with the blast all day, all night,
 Than live with men, if men must be such fiends.

In my young boyhood once I read this line,
 " An honest man's the noblest work of God,"
 I thought the poet vexed, and blamed his spleen ;
 (As you perhaps may smile or scowl at mine ;)
 I called the doctrine infidel, and said,
 The *Christian* is the noblest work of God.
 Ah, yes, but how can he be better known,
 Than by his honesty ? Would God no man
 Could take the Christian name without the nature ;
 But truth is, many wear a fair *outside*,
 While all within is stench and dead men's bones ;
 To speak out all, I mean but few are frank.
 They will not say to friends and foes the truth,
 The whole of truth, and nothing but the truth.
 How few *before your face* will tell your faults,
 Yet honesty says loudly *here or no where*.
 Why hate my faults and will not tell me why ?
 Why have me tried where none defends my cause ?
 'Tis only the *whole truth* that gives the fact ;
 More than the whole, or half, is but a lie.
 The Christian's great Exemplar was sincere ;
 At every place and time his lips spoke truth—
 Said he, and said it to the men themselves,
 Ye serpents, ye progeny of vipers,
 How can ye hope to 'scape the Hell ye earn ?
 Ah, this was heaven-like, was *being honest*.
 He dared to be the foe of vice *out-right* ;

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And shall we fear to copy from the Lord ?
 We cast reproach upon him when we *dare not*.
 How can the good man dare deceive his fellows ?
 Let the ungodly practice their deceit ;
 They have their sure reward ! Let us speak truth.
Be men the foes of God ? Then tell them so.
 Say nothing that shall hide from them their state,
 And make them hope for heaven while lost.
 Why tell them God is pleased, while conscience lowers,
 And death draws near, the judgment close at hand.
 " Hell moves to meet them," all their hopes a dream ?
 The pit, the outer darkness, and the gnawing worm,
 Will soon their doom disclose, your treachery prove.
Be men the friends of God, Why injure them ?
 Why need they on the road to Heaven be betrayed,
 And grieved, and wounded by a Christian friend ?
 Lips, that a coal from off the altar touched,
 How can they lie ? But if all this may be,
 (O, tell it not in Gath, hush it in Askalon.)
 Still can they to their very kindred lie
 Deceive a brother ! undermine a friend !
 Hope too, to live in heaven with that friend !

The author hopes that he possesses a spirit of forgiveness, though he has thus made use of the poet's license, and expressed in strong language his hatred of duplicity.

HONESTAS.

LINES SENT AS A "RETURN TOKEN" FOR A VALUABLE PRESENT,
 JANUARY 1, 1831.

'Twas New Year's day of thirty-one,
 It dawned on Troy with promise kind ;
 The Spirit had its work begun ;
 The dead to raise, the lost to find.

We early sought the house of prayer—
 'Twas full of feeling, full of God,
 For scores of throbbing hearts were there
 To seek his grace and plead his word.

Kind Heaven heard the morning song,
 And listened to our fervent cry,
 While angels did the song prolong,
 And told the story through the sky.

God had shed down some mercy drops,
 And Troy its sweetest New Year saw,
 And cheerful smiles and heavenly hopes
 Graced many a lately anxious brow.

Two forms appeared in kindness dressed—
 Affection's token in their hands ;
 "The giver shall be doubly blessed,
 The God of mercy so demands.

May God your kindness quite repay,
 Your New Year's gift in grace restore,
 And guide you by a heavenly ray,
 And on your seed his blessings pour,
 For ever and for ever more.

A DIRGE OF THE SANCTUARY.*

TwAS the third watch of night, and all was still,
 Save the lone house-dog in his kennel dark,
 Who gave portentous signs of woe at hand—
 Then burst the cry of *fire!* on my drowsy ear.
 I hearkened, and the cry waxed louder still.
 And louder.

My chamber opened on the north and east,
 And the shrill piercing cry had waked me—
 Oh! 'twas the Temple of the living God
 All lighted up by its own gloomy fires ;
 Each ornament became a flaming torch,
 And guided the destroyer in his ruthless march
 Oh! it seized at length the stubborn frame-work,

* Written on the night of the burning of St. Philip's (an Episcopal) Church, at Charleston, S. C., in 1835—the oldest church in that city, and one of the most ancient church edifices in the United States.

As savage tiger, from the deep dark wood
 Seizes the aged pilgrim by the way—
 Tears the flesh, piecemeal, quivering in his teeth,
 And bears him to his lair—then stays to rest.
 A sacred tablet told its wondrous age—
 How solemn read that *seventeen hundred twenty-three* !
 But all its work was done, and heaven now called
 The city to its obsequies. O, why be burned
 The consecrated house of God! Fly quick some angel,
 Dip your wing in life's fair stream and quench the fire,
 It should not, cannot burn, for God is there.
 Most cruel storm, to swell thy blast, and rage,
 And blow, at this sad hour so barb'rously!
 Ah, must thy pipes all stay their melody,*
 And not one gloomy dirge mourn out thy obsequies?
 Prostrate in dust the pride of Charleston lies:
 The glory of a century is gone, clean gone for ever;
 The watchful clock knew well the wonted hour,
 And gathered up its strength to strike once more—
 As if impressed that it could never speak again,
 't uttered *one! two!! three!!!* and all was still.†

A WONDROUS BEGGAR.

ALL hungry from the wilderness he came,
 Barefoot, and covered with a camel's skin,
 And girt his loins with thong, and bald.
 Months had the ravens brought him meat and flesh,
 And Cherith brought him water, kind Heaven's bounty;
 Ah, but the brook had dried. The ravens kept
 Their duty up, through many a moon unwearied,
 And called him to his meal, each morn, each night,
 And when the work was done, stayed by the task.
 "Elijah, man of God, come to your bread!"
 How strange the servant, and the server strange,
 A bird that lives on prey, and loves most loathsome food!

Referring to the organ.

† The tower fell just as the clock struck three.

How came he by the clean and healthful meal?
 Did it drop down from heaven? Or came it whence?
 The prophet's Lord owns all the cattle on the hills.

But he had gone to prove a widow's faith,
 And have her fit betimes for heaven. Famine raged—
 The earth was iron and the sky was brass—
 Nor rain nor dew had dropped for many a month—
 Death stared her in the face. Her meal was low,
 Her oil sunk in the cruise. What could she do
 But die? But lo! the wondrous beggar came from far!
 She knew her noble guest. 'Twas not a costly palace,
 Nor she a queen in gay and rich attire;
 No badge could win him to her lonely hut.
 He asked for water. Ahab's flocks had none;
 'Twas famine in the courts of kings and princes.
 What wondrous streamlet, think ye, fed her spring?
 Did it rill down from heaven? Or came it up
 From earth's deep fountains, where the famine reached not?
 Deep from the nether springs some angel drew it up;
 It came most plenteously—it came most timely—
 The widow and her son were gathering up two sticks,
 To bake a cake and die—'twas the last morsel.
 Bake one for me, the wondrous beggar cried,
 And then for thee and him—*There'll be no want.*
There'll be no want! the little urchin cried; what can it mean?
 The oil and meal are almost gone;
 He knows not, said the careful lad, our want;
 He did not hear our cry for daily bread,
 This morning, ere the dawn had broken forth;
 He did not see my anxious mother's tears;
 I wonder does he know she is a widow?
 O mother, let me tell him he has missed the house
 Where Heaven would have him fed. Hold now thy peace,
 my son,
 The stranger is from God.—I heard him pray—
 His faith took hold of Heaven—'twas the strong grip of death—
 God will yet make it plain, my son, "*There'll be no want.*"
 Ah! what can mother mean? The beggar's cake
 Will drain the barrel dry, and spend the oil.
 She baked the cake—the meal expended not—
 The oil but multiplied. There seemed far more

Than when they supped last night—Heaven increased it ;
 Now she well knew her guest—*God's holy prophet*—
 And many a month she fed him at her board ;
 Her meal still lasted, and her oil held out.
 Their holy converse we may know in heaven,
 When olden times shall pour their story on the ear
 Of the redeemed. Reader, let you and I be there—
 We'll have the story from their own sweet lips,
 In high and holy songs. * * *
 He'll tell us of his raising up the lad,
 While lodged 'neath the same roof, and fed by miracle ;
 And the whole story of the prophets slain ;
 Of Jezebel, the impious wife of Ahab,
 Whose heart was set on mischief and on blood,
 Till the dogs licked her own, at Naboth's vineyard.
 Perchance he'll glance at scenes of later date,
 And tell the tale of the transfigured Lamb
 On Tabor, ere he suffered on Moriah's mount ;
 And then he'll help us to admire His love,
 Who washed us.

DIRGE FOR THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1834.

In a mouldering cave, where her woe sought retreat,
 Columbia sat wasted with care,
 For a Washington wept, and lamented her loss,
 And gave herself up to despair.

The sides of her cell she had sculptured around
 With th' exploits of her favorite son,
 And every pathway and every rock,
 Seemed inscribed with some deed he had done.

The star of her glory rose high in the west,
 Her Eagle no prowess could daunt ;
 The cleft of the rock was the place of her rest—
 The heavens invited her haunt.

But the tears ceased at length to moisten her face,
 Her commerce filled every sea ;
 Her glory was sung by the nations afar,
 'Twas the song of the brave and the free.

But a sigh from her cave broke her joy in the midst,
 Like the slow dirge of one she begat ;
 We listened to know who the stranger could be
 'Twas the loved and the brave LAFAYETTE.

Hail, heroes! you're gone from the seat of the brave,
 O! to know that your sins were forgiven,
 That your spirits may rise, when you're waked from the grave,
 To fill some high mansion in heaven ;

And the land that you loved, may it smile in the west,
 Till moon, and till sun shine no more ;
 Be the theme of the brave, and the place of their rest,
 For ever and for ever more.

THE INFLUENCE OF A GOOD TASTE UPON THE MORAL AFFECTIONS.*

THE question has been often asked, whether this is a deformed or a beautiful world ; whether it came from the hand of its Maker *in its present aspect*, or has been marred and defaced by some mighty disaster. Men have had on this subject widely different opinions. One has seen nothing in which this world is defective ; no mountain he would have levelled, no valley he would raise, no rock he would bury, no marsh he would drain, no heath he would fertilize, no morass he would redeem. Another has seen, or thought he saw, deformity every where, and has in many a gloomy hour responded to that moan of the poet, uttered in view of the first transgression :

“ Earth felt the wound, and Nature, from her seat
 Sighing through all her works, gave signs of wo,
 That all was lost.”

* Delivered before the Alexandrian Society of Amherst College, August 21, 1827.

To him it has seemed, that in every hill and vale and ocean and lake and heath and river there is some curse to be deplored. Others again have discovered on the face of this world many beauties, which must have been designed as such by its Creator; while yet they see deformities, which indicate, that when Jehovah rested from his work he left this world not as it now is, and which bespeak some convulsion, by which its distortions have been generated, and much of its original beauty lost. Some of its most elevated ridges wear the marks of having risen from the ocean, while the presumption is, that what were once its mountains are now buried in the depths of the sea.

That the earth has been swept over by some deluge passing from north to south, is too obvious to admit of a doubt. But whether the event, happen when or how it might, finally left the surface of the world *deformed* or *beautiful*, may still be a question to be decided, very differently perhaps, by our different tastes. One man will see deformity in some cases where another sees only beauty. It may even be questioned, whether men of equally improved tastes will invariably agree in what is beautiful, and what deformed, in the sceneries of nature. One may have taste only for what is *plain*, and another for what is *splendid*. One may be most gratified when in his landscape there are seen the barren rock, and the broken cliff; while another, who can be pleased only with what is useful, must see every spot fertile, have every rock concealed, and every eminence accessible. Which of these have the best taste, is a question on which ingenuity might employ itself most elegantly, and not without profit.

Whether taste should be denominated an internal sense, or judgment operating without any perceptible process of reasoning, is of small moment; for whatever difficulties there may be in defining, there is none in understanding it. "Taste," says an elegant writer, "is of all nature's gifts the most easily felt, and the most difficult to explain; it would not be what it is, if it could be defined; for it judges of objects beyond the reach of judgment, and serves in a manner as a magnifying glass to reason." I have supposed it not wide from the truth to say, that taste is a sense of the understanding, holding much the same relation to objects of nature and art, that conscience, another sense, holds to moral objects. As one has been defined, "The power of receiving pleasure or pain from the beauties or deformities of nature and of art;" so the other may be termed, the power of receiving pleasure or pain from moral beauty or deformity. Hence, to trace the resemblance

a little further, as there may be a vitiated conscience that shall approve of the most abominable deeds, so there may be a vitiated taste that is pleased with what is beyond doubt a deformity. I am aware that this remark however involves the question, whether there is any standard of taste founded in the principles of the human constitution, or whether casual association is to account for all our notions in matters of taste.

But leaving all these questions to men of more leisure, I propose to inquire, *whether a cultivated taste exerts a favorable influence upon the moral affections.* I have supposed the affirmative of this question capable of the fullest proof, and that the discussion of it would lead to a great variety of practical and important remarks suited to this occasion. I would say, then, in the

First place, That a cultivated taste tends to soothe and restrain the unruly and turbulent passions. I venture to assert, that the religion of Jesus Christ excepted, there is no power that can operate more favorably upon the passions than such a taste. The mind that is under its plastic influence will naturally be led to dwell on objects that excite the better emotions, the soft and tender, or the grand and sublime; is withdrawn from vexatious care, and led to retirement and reflection; and the result of all this is tranquility. And the mind thus occupied will not so readily seek enjoyments that are forbidden.

In all parts of creation there are beauties or sublimities by which a good taste is gratified. Above are the hosts of heaven, the sun going forth in his strength, the moon walking in brightness, and the uncounted stars decorating the whole expanse. As we descend to earth, we find it clothed in beauties too permanent to suffer any power but that which spake them into being to erase them. Hence, to a cultivated taste there are every where sources of enjoyment calculated to supplant the rougher affections, and generate and mature those that are kind and lovely; and the mind that is innocently happy is not so easily disturbed by temptations.

What evil passion can rage uncontrolled at a moment when the mind is happy in enjoyments which God has not forbidden: happy in the works of his own hands. The mind thus occupied will be urged to the reflection of the poet:

“These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty, thine this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair; thyself how wondrous then!”

And what power has any forbidden object to attract or control a

mind so employed? *Envy*, for instance, what place can it have? A good taste enjoys what is another's. It cares not whose is the landscape, or the palace, or the tastefully cultivated garden. It waits not to ask what interest accrues to self from the fertility, the order, the convenience, the harmony, or variety which it sees and admires. It covets not to call the stars its own, nor the brook that winds down the valley, nor the fruits and foliage that cover the hills. The *stranger*, no less than the *proprietor*, may inhale the fragrance, and hear the music, and feel the harmony that breathes about him. The man of taste realizes to some extent the rich experience of the child of God:

“He looks abroad into the varied field
Of nature, and, though poor, perhaps, compared
With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,
Calls the delightful scenery all his own.
His are the mountains, and the valleys his,
And the resplendent rivers.”

* * * * *

“Yes, ye may fill your garner, ye that reap
The loaded soil, and ye may waste much good,
In senseless riot.”

But there are men that have “richer use of yours than you.” The man of cultivated taste owns all he sees. The cottage on the hill, and the flocks that feed about it, and the woodbine that creeps it over, and the house-birds that build their nests there, are all the instruments of his gratification. Nature, with all its original scenery, and art, with all its varied improvements, are so much the property and inheritance of a good taste, that envy can hardly find entrance.

Covetousness, a kindred passion, will be restrained by the same means. A good taste can leave others in possession of what is theirs, satisfied with the power of enjoying what is *not*, as well as what *is* its own. It is like the lark, which can soar amid the heavens, and may light and drink at any brook, and gather its food on any field, and cares not to call the territory its own.

I even venture to say that the *angry passions* are restrained by the same means. These are more likely to have their abode in minds that have never traveled from home, nor been expanded by cultivation; and are produced by a contractedness and a jealousy, as mean as mischievous; deformities which a good taste, as well as a right temper, reprobates as coarse, unsightly, and repulsive. The harsh language, and the course rebuke, and the distorted

countenance, and the whole apparatus of malevolence are, to a good taste, grating beyond endurance.

I have not meant to say, nor have I said, that an improved taste will wholly subdue these passions; but that it may be the ally of piety. We have always seen the rougher passions and an uncultivated taste in the same household, and associated by the same fireside. Can you not know something of a family by the avenue to their habitation? When you see it all deformity without; unsightliness, and disproportion, and inconvenience, can you not trace, many times, a corresponding roughness of moral aspect in its uncultivated tenants? While the mind acts upon every thing about it, there is from every thing about it, a reaction upon the mind. I know there are cases when we discover what is kind in the midst of unsightliness and deformity. We have sometimes found true religion where there is little else. It is not denied that the grace of God may achieve what a cultivated taste could not, and still the latter may be very far from powerless. Go to the tasteful but lowly dwelling, which is approached by a neatly adorned avenue set with many a flower, and stripped of all that is coarse and uncouth, and there will be many chances that its door will be hospitably thrown open, and the stranger welcomed, and his inquiries civilly and kindly answered. The very child that meets you and welcomes you, will exhibit a mind mellowed down by the transforming influence of the scenery around him.

I know that the passions may be *tame*, through deficiency of intellect, or may be, on the other hand, too refractory for a good taste to restrain; and when the latter has operated, even powerfully, it may not have produced the whole effect that piety would.

“None but a power divinely strong
Can turn the current of the soul.”

We have seen men of polished manners, and improved tastes, under a paroxysm of passion, degraded into all that is coarse and forbidding in the savage. Hence the barbarous habit of duelling, even among our most accomplished men, and hence the coarse and uncourteous style with which eloquent lips, and the pen well disciplined, can sometimes attack a perhaps perfectly innocent rival. How ashamed have we sometimes been, to see issuing from the halls of legislation, a ribaldry that would raise a blush in Newgate. These were instances when a cultivated taste had not power enough to imprison the malignant passions, and showed its infinite inferiority to that grace of God, which can bind the strong man, and

even cast out devils. So the ferocious animal that is charmed by music, retains still his claws and his fangs, does but temporarily forget his habits of prey, and is mild only till the harmony that held him has ceased. The power which cannot convert the lion into a lamb, may lay his fury ; what cannot render the vulture a dove, may turn away his eye from the prey. A cultivated taste may, in the hour of assault, open the mind to conviction, and lay the tumult of passion, till reason and conscience can do their office, and thus the man may be saved through its influence from a headlong plunge into misery and ruin.

We ascribe to a good taste a similar influence over the deformities of surfeiting, inebriation, and lust. In the hall of gluttony, in the haunts of intemperance, and in the dark retreats of pollution, it sees what offends it as certainly as piety is offended. That the appetites should govern reason is a disgusting perversion of all order and decorum. That the fancy, the imagination, the memory, and the whole apparatus of intellect, with the organs of sense and the whole family of kind and useful instincts, should be subjected to the dominion of lust, is as unseemly and incongruous, as it is impious. To see the angel mind suspend its nobler occupations, and descend from the high elevation of reflection and reason, to become conversant with the premises, and the conclusions, and the outlandish dialect of the gaming table, or the vulgarities of the midnight carouse, is to an improved taste pitiable, and disgusting. I would have every man a *Christian*, that I might be sure that he will not descend so low, but, if this may not be, I would have him a man of taste and refinement, that he may not so debase himself. When we have seen the man, who might have been a philosopher, a poet, a statesman or a philanthropist ; who might have vied with Locke and Boyle and Newton and Burke ; might have been classed with Howard and Sharp and Clarkson and Wilberforce ; might have risen in holiness of design and energy of purpose, to an enrolment with Brainard and Swarts and Vanderkemp and Martin and Mills ; might have made themselves greatly useful and very dear to their generations as did Edwards and Dwight and Worcester and Moore ; —to see one who might have thus exalted his nature, and given the highest value to his existence, reeling through the streets, and pouring forth pollution from his impious lips, as he returns from the rendezvous, to distract the order, and break the peace, and extinguish the last lingering hope of his family ; Oh ! this is a sight, with which, religion aside, and humanity aside, a good taste is disgusted to the last degree.

And when concupiscence, in its unhallowed vagrancy, has murdered the peace of some other family, and begins to re-act upon home, withering all the prospects that budded and blossomed there; and the wife becomes ashamed of her husband, and the children of their father, and the happy circle is at length broken up, and cast out the prey of a selfish and unfeeling world, then is a good taste no less than piety itself outraged.—As if the clown should be permitted, with coarse, untutored pencil, to besmear and utterly ruin one of the finest paintings of Raphael, or chisel into uncouthness and distortion one of the noblest statues of Angelo; for no painting or statue, no achievement of art or genius, has ever more highly gratified a refined taste, than the image of a harmonious family, moving on in the sphere of domestic duty and enjoyment, while

“ Each fulfils his part,
With sympathizing heart,
In all the cares of life and love.”

Let some cultivated mind compare to the life this drawing, let some statuary lay in bold relief before the eye all the smiling features of such a scene, and then let it be all defaced by the debauched husband and father, and tell me if a good taste would be more disgusted, should a swine from the mire enter a palace, and tear and besmear and destroy every object it could reach. Thus a good taste is at war with the unhallowed passions, and becomes a powerful ally of virtue.

Let me say again, that a cultivated taste is the friend of virtue, as it operates to remove the monuments of our disgrace, and objects of our embarrassment and vexation, that have marred the beauty of the exterior creation. Give it the means, and it obliterates every physical disorder, and brings back the world to its primitive beauty and loveliness, and causes to glow a boundless Eden in the valley of death. It would terrace every hill to its summit, or cast it into the deep ravine; would wall and restrain the wayward current; would drain the morass; would shape to proportion the deformities of the protruding rock; would spread fertility over the heath, and paint every cottage, and eradicate for ever the noxious shrub and plant and tree. Thus would there be destroyed the haunt of the serpent, the lair of the wolf, the retreat of the robber, the pestiferous exhalations that generate disease and death, and the world would become beautiful again as when its Almighty Creator pronounced it all very good. And then who can doubt but its tenants would become more happy and more vir-

tuons. Having fewer fears and fewer vexations, they would indulge less frequently the malignant passions. They might sit then under their vine and their figtree, and there would be none to make them afraid.

Let me say again, that a cultivated taste tends to bring men under the influence of sacred truth, and thus holds them within the reach of resistless reformation and virtue. Reason and judgment confirm the decisions of a good taste, and are employed though imperceptibly in all its operations; hence such a taste is friendly to correct habits of thought; and the man accustomed to think correctly on one subject, is, to say the least, the better prepared to investigate another. Now there is no other system in which such a taste can find the harmony, and the order, and the consistency, and the grandeur, which prevail in the system of divine truth. *There* are positions that no genius can controvert, arguments that no discernment can impeach, illustrations that strike with the vividness of lightning, and conclusions that bear upon an ingenuous mind with the weight of a world. Hence we should decide, *a priori*, that a good taste could not overlook the book of God. And what is there in the whole apparatus of a *practical religion* to which such a taste is not congenial? The Sabbath of the Lord, that stills the tumult of labor, calls man from his drudgery, clothes him in neatness, and wakes the peal of the church going bell, and congregates the multitude, and seats them in the sanctuary, and breaks down all adventitious distinction, and puts a thousand minds upon the track of the same august truth; and spreads a stillness and a composure and a thoughtfulness over the whole region, how *beautiful!* how *sublime!* If we look at *facts*, do they not testify, that a cultivated taste sustains a close relationship to all this? Are the families that are represented in the solemn assembly, the mean, and the uncultivated? And do we find lounging away the hours of holy rest, the neatly clad, and best improved portions of the community? Or do we find this better part of society in the sanctuary, joining in its prayers, and aiding in its praise, and listening to the mysteries of heavenly truth, and bringing to a higher elevation that taste, which aided in assembling them? Go to those districts of Christendom, where no gospel is proclaimed, and no multitudes assemble in the sanctuary, and no general survey of their hamlets will remind you that it is the Lord's day; and sure as life, *religion* is wanting there, and about as sure is the total absence of a cultivated taste. You will see patrolling the streets, their untutored and beggarly offspring, and in most of

their habitations you will discover the sure indication of minds as uncultivated, as their principles and conduct are immoral. A good taste would remove many of the obstacles to keeping a Sabbath, and building a sanctuary, and supporting a ministry, and sustaining a Sabbath school, and erecting a library for the improvement of the public mind.

Do any ask, How is all this consistent with that declaration, that, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of this world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence?" Now let me say, that men may be wise, and mighty, and noble, in the sense of this passage, and still be as destitute of a good taste as their postillion or their footman. Mere wealth may procure the wisdom and the nobility and the might here spoken of, but it does not follow that there will be the delicate imagination, and the keen sensibility, and the soundness of judgment, and the wise course of reading and of thinking, which indicate a cultivated taste. We have seen a profusion of splendor and of equipage, and a disgusting routine of ceremony, where there was the total absence of the lovely attribute we eulogize. One is virtue's foe, the other its ally. The whole of that display which wealth can purchase and in which pride and vanity and lust vegetate, is the opposite of virtue; but not so that sense of the mind which gives us an eye to see and a power to enjoy the ten thousand beauties that God has spread over the works of his hands. It is not that we can see loveliness *in the sceneries of nature or the productions of art*, that can offend the Lord, but that we can see it in *vice*. It is not that we have the wisdom *that waked in Eden*, that God will disapprove; but that we are wise in our own conceits, wise to do evil. It is not the nobility that is generated by thought and reflection and reasoning, and which is found in angels, that operates to shut heaven's door against us; but the nobility which originates in misapplied wealth and flattery and pride.

But it is asked whether a cultivated taste has not sometimes rendered persons unhappy, as they must often be constrained, in a world like this, to be conversant with what is coarse and disgusting? I will not deny that there is some truth in this. We have seen a delicate woman bred to the most refined enjoyments, and

improved in her taste till she deserved all that the world could have done to make her happy, yoked unequally to a savage; in which case,

“Native rage and native fear rose and forbid delight,”

and we were ready to wish that, to make her condition less unpleasant, her mind had remained rude. And we have seen another picture, a *false taste* connected with no native endowments, or solid improvements of intellect; and it resulted, as we should expect, in pride and passion, and fed its fantasy on ideal beauties, not seen in nature nor known in art; read of, perhaps, in the pages of a novel, or seen in the reveries of an hysteric imagination; and the result was misery, *as it should be*. It was a sickly, feverish taste, adapted only to an ideal world, and not qualified to be conversant with sober realities. But it was a vexation that such *lunacy* should be called taste.

A good taste must be connected with intellect, and must grow with the growth of mind. It is then sane and sensible. If we do fear that, in some few instances, a cultivated taste has diminished happiness, in most cases where this has seemed the fact, there was the total absence of all that deserved the name.

It is said that taste is a costly attribute, and produces poverty, and thus immorality and misery. I promptly assert that it costs far less than the appetites it restrains. Would the sot and the epicure expend in the cultivation of a good taste the fortunes lavished upon their appetites, the latter expense would be saved, and the amount would surround them with ten thousand beauties, conveniences, and comforts. It will generally happen, in this country at least, that if men will forego the pampering of their lusts, they will not lack the means of gratifying a good taste. It makes not *large demands* where there are *small resources*. The lowly cottage, with its little patch of shrubbery, fruits, and flowers, may be quite as tasteful as the palace, with its proud and lofty architecture.

If it be thought that taste consumes time, it may be answered, that it saves more than it consumes. It makes all its drafts upon idleness and vice. Its bed of flowers it cultivates, and has time left, while sloth claims another nap, and while envy slanders a neighbor, and while appetite is gorging its pernicious viands and fatal draughts, and while covetousness is counting up its gains, and while anger is rankling, and wrath is burning, and revenge is plotting in the bosom of fools. I even assert that its tendency is to enrich. A good taste will seek the means of its own gratification.

It will aim first to acquire the necessaries and conveniences of life, and this will lead to enterprise that will nerve the man for duty. Besides the exertions made for these purposes, he will put forth another effort that he may gratify his taste, and, other things equal, will be the more industrious and thriving man. He holds to the men about him the high station of a benefactor, and would make any effort within his power, and endure any privation, rather than lean for subsistence upon their charity. Could you, by some magical process, infuse a good taste into that multitude of paupers which brood, like the incubus, upon the bosom of community, you would exterminate pauperism. When did you ever know a man of taste become a pauper? At least when, except in some rare instances of prolonged disease, saw you a pauper who was not wholly wanting in this inestimable endowment? When I see the new married pair with no object about them tasteful, by a kind of instinct I mark them out for ultimate poverty.

Let it not be thought that a good taste tends to form a fictitious and deceitful character. It is confessed that rustic coarseness, associated with honesty, is preferable to a Chesterfieldian system, founded less on the principles of a good taste than in falsehood and infidelity. A good taste scorns the fellowship of principles so selfish, and contracted, and cowardly. While it favors a polish as fair and rich as Chesterfield's, it associates with it the integrity of a Hale, the philanthropy of a Howard, and the Christian patriotism of a Wilberforce.

We have known the error to creep into colleges, that taste and genius are not likely to be united, and under this impression many silly youths have feigned a carelessness in their personal appearance, and have accustomed themselves to keep their study and their dormitory in a state of disorder and filth, as the best evidence they could give of mental vigor. And not unfrequently has this error cast reproach upon our seats of science, while parents have been grieved to see their sons return from the seminary, having unlearned many a lesson of decency that had been for years very industriously taught them. The age had produced somewhere an eccentric genius, who was totally deficient in common sense and common decency; and the opinion prevailed, that to have his powers one must copy his insufferable negligence. But show me the youth who has finished his education a very clown, and I say, possibly he may be a genius, and yet a beggar and a bear too; but rest assured his clownishness is a prognostic only for the bear and the beggar, not of the accomplished and success-

ful scholar ; and we always fear there will not be enough of the better part to cover the worse. I know we sometimes see the disgusting contrast of all this, the spruce and booted and fantastical coxcomb ; lavishing, conscience and economy not consulted, the earnings of another upon his vanity ; the gallant, when he should be the student, the curse of colleges, the stigma of his father's house, and ultimately the scorn alike of both sexes. But I turn from this disgusting image.

As early as possible, then, I would have the taste improved, and would urge its cultivation among the duties of piety. I would have every man lay the world under obligation to him, because he makes the little world about him more fertile and more beautiful. I would have every young man go away from the seat of science feeling strongly, that every deformity of the natural world and the moral, is to be cured, as far as possible, by his influence ; that he is to touch nothing, mind or matter, but it must come out of his hands more lovely in the sight of God or man. He must contribute to make the desert bloom around him, and the wilderness to become an Eden. Let him feel, that as wide as the ruins of the apostacy is the field of his labor, the curse that fell on man, and the mischief that, through him, fell on the territory that he occupies.

In every department of life a good taste gives high promise of influence and usefulness. Does the youth intend to excel as a *classical writer* ? a good taste will furnish him with language more copious, and figures more striking and appropriate ; and a field of illustration more wide and diversified. It will give him a power to persuade and control that he would not have otherwise attained. In Addison, what a powerful instrument of good was his taste. It chastened his wit, and enabled him to shame into disuse many a mistaken maxim of his times, and rendered him the scourge and the dread of proud and polished profligacy. His finished style was the grand means of carrying his strictures upon manners and morals into the parlor and the palace, where they operated in purifying the character of the nation and the world. Not that a good taste should convert every writer into an Addison : this would be neither possible nor desirable. While his writings may be read with profit by every man, they may not be safely imitated by any. Let every man's style be his own. Let him go forth in his own livery, and use his own weapons in whatever cause he would sustain. Be the bent of his genius what it may, a good taste will be one of its most powerful aids. Every excrescence of his genius it will lop off. His wit it will chasten, his rashness it will restrain

his boldness and originality it will regulate, his patriotism it will purify. It will adapt his genius to more nations and ages than one. Hence it is that works of genuine taste never become obsolete. Homer, and Virgil, and Milton, and Cowper, will continue to be read through all generations.

Does the youth aspire to eminent usefulness as a preacher of righteousness? he will need the guidance of a good taste; as there are polished sinners that must be won, and accomplished believers that must be guided home to heaven. In each part of his work he will have need of language soft and chaste as angels use. A good taste need not enervate or secularize his style, but will, if there be genius, invigorate it. It will qualify him to handle profitably those subjects which are in themselves disgusting, and from which delicacy might otherwise shrink. He may descend, accompanied by a good taste as his guardian angel, into the lowest cells of iniquity, and make war with it in all its haunts of filthiness, without offending delicacy. It will give him that address which will bring him into successful conflict with a whole family of vices, that would otherwise lie without his reach, operate beyond his control, and parry every thrust he made. It will teach him how to characterize foul iniquity, and to stamp its shame by an indignation so full of soul, and by illustrations so elevated, as to hold himself a whole atmosphere above the meanness and the turpitude he depicts. Seated on a cloud, he may, unharmed, dart his lightnings down into the dreariest and filthiest abodes of moral putrefaction. As if an angel, with sword pointed and burnished in heaven, and himself shrouded in celestial glory, should be sent to still the tumults and lay the blasphemies of the infernal prison. The better the taste employed, and the more elevated the language in which admonition and rebuke is administered, the deeper may he descend till he has seized iniquity in its profoundest caverns, and laid it naked, and lashed it into agony and into shame.

Would the youth qualify himself to be a *teacher*? he will have great need of a cultivated taste, and that whatever may be the age at which he is to take the rising generation under his instruction. It is a grief and a loss too when our common schools are committed to the care of men void of taste; for the hackneyed proverb is still most true,

“Just as the twig is bent, the tree’s inclined.”

The child of five years old may, through this deficiency of his teacher, receive a bad impression of character that will last till he

dies. It is yet more lamentable when the teacher of our youth is destitute of this endowment, and cannot point out to his pupils the beauties that lie along the track of improvement. This very failure in the teacher has probably damped the ardor of many a young man, and turned back to manual labor one who might have reached eminence in literature. It is a loss not easily estimated when the preceptors in our academies and tutors in our colleges cannot point out to their classes the flowers that bloom, and the sublilities that open to view as they climb the hill of science. And through all the ascending grades of literary instruction, a good taste becomes increasingly important. There may be much in the character of our public teachers to admire; there may be those talents and that good sense that are indispensable, and that amiableness of temper which in their station is above all price, and that piety which we most of all revere, and still if a good taste be wanting the evil will be long and distinctly seen in the department of educated men, and be from them spread out and handed down till it affect most unhappily the character of our whole republic through many generations. On them too it must depend to give American genius its polish and elevation and influence in the literary world, and to decide whether in letters, as in correct views of true liberty and enlightened civil government, we are to stand admired and honored as the first nation on the face of the earth.

Would the youth gain distinguished eminence at the bar? his good taste must enable him to chastise fraud and mischief without vulgarity. The ribaldry that has sometimes disgraced the legal profession, must, as society becomes more enlightened, fall into the contempt it merits, and its place be filled with solid and dignified argument and eloquence. The advocate should make himself respected by the judge and the jury, on whose enlightened decision rests the issue of his cause. And he will so often see fraud and crime in a smooth and varnished aspect, concealed behind all that art can do to polish and baptize it into honesty, and all that wealth and influence can do to cover its deformities, and all that pride and impudence can do to confound its opposer, that an improved taste will be requisite to follow it into the parlor and the theatre and the billiard room, and hunt it down, and strip it, and mark it, that no drapery may longer conceal its hideous and accursed form. If his weapons be coarse and blunt, he will give polished vice the vantage ground, and furnish it an unanswerable argument why it should not be willing to perish by his sword. In

the hall of legislation too, and on the bench, and through all the ascending grades of political elevation, a good taste is increasingly necessary.

The physician too, to be respected and useful, must be a man of taste. He is necessarily conversant with the best families and the most delicate diseases, and cannot be coarse without offence. One would not choose to invite the rustic into his sick chamber, or submit himself to his surgical operations. Society is abused, (and the abuse should have been long since corrected,) when the clown is pronounced capable of practising the healing art, and is sent out to learn his first lessons of decency from the gentle manners, the subdued accents, and restrained habits of the sick and dying bed. Chain him to the plow; put a spade into his hand, and not a lancet; keep him from touching the sacred casket of the *materia medica*.

No matter into what department of life and action the youth is entering from the walls of the seminary, he must every where have a good taste or he will bring literature into disrepute.

My motive, then, young gentlemen, in addressing you on this subject, is distinctly seen. God has given us a world in which there are many beauties, but, through the apostacy, many deformities. These beauties I would have you qualified to see and relish, and these deformities to obliterate. I would have you employ all your genius to create other beauties, till every spot about you shall smile, every eminence be comely, and every valley verdant. I would there should be in your views an enlightened graciousness, which, if not religion, is its handmaid; if not born in heaven, was early in Eden; if not possessed of power to subdue the heart, may mould some of its rougher affections into milder forms; and though not a radical cure for the calamities of life, has abundant power to soothe. You would then be more useful and happy while you live, and we should have higher hopes of meeting you in heaven, and joining you in exploring the wonders of that pure and tasteful city, whose walls are jasper, whose gates are of pearl, and whose streets are paved with gold.

Before I conclude, I must be permitted to devote a few words to friendship. I see many faces here that have often lighted up my own with a smile. It is affecting to meet you again in this world of change. It is probably the last time I shall ever see you all until we meet in that country "from whose bourne no traveler returns." I learn that death has made inroads among you. It is a note of admonition to us all to be prepared to die. The past year has been

to us one of peculiar interest. God has deigned to display the power of his grace under my poor ministrations, and has given me often the pleasure of sitting down by the conscience and the heart that his truth and his Spirit had impressed. And I have rejoiced to hear that he has been in very deed with you, begetting everlasting consolation and good hope in many of your hearts. Thus it appears that he who is rich in mercy was with me in the way that I went, and remained with you. May he still be with us, and keep us by his power, and guide our wayward feet to his heavenly rest. There may we another day meet, and with bursting hearts rehearse the mercies that bore with us and brought us safely through, and sustained us in our trials, and managed our spiritual enemies, and covered our heads in the day of battle, and subdued our lusts, and planted our feet at last on the hills of promise. You will let me and my dear people have an interest in your prayers. And may the Lord bless this people and its ministry, and bless these rising schools of science, and all their guardians and teachers, and all who come to seek wisdom at these gates. From age to age let heaven's richest influence come down on these hills, and flow out in streams of salvation through the world, and down through all generations, till all the curse shall be repealed, and God be once more pleased with the world he made.

EXPOSITION OF 1 JOHN IV. 19.

We love him, because he first loved us.

THIS text has been subjected to various, and, in a measure, contradictory expositions.

Some have supposed, that our love to God, is mere gratitude to him for having loved us. They have gone upon the supposition that naturally we imbibe the impression that God is our enemy, but when at length we discover the mistake, and learn that he loves us, it fills us with gratitude and love to him. To this exposition there are several objections. If it were true, more light would change the heart. The most depraved man, needs only to be convinced that God is not so angry with him as he supposed, and in fact is his friend, and the change is effected. He needs

only to have his mistake corrected, and he is a new man, and to effect this, nothing is necessary but light. Depravity, of course, has its seat only in the understanding. But this will not agree with the testimony of inspiration. Regeneration is spoken of as a change of heart. The stony heart is said to be taken away, and there is given a heart of flesh. The new man has passed from death unto life. But all this is hyperbole, if the change is the mere correction of a mistake.

If this exposition were correct, the gospel could have no agency in the conversion of sinners, for on the principles of the gospel, no man can have any evidence that God loves him, till he loves God. "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." Constantly do the Scriptures teach us, that our interest in the Divine affections, can be known only by our love to God, our obedience to his commands, and our attachment to his holy family. But if the exposition given be true, none of all this can take place, till God has loved us, and has revealed to us this fact. Hence a voice from heaven, and not the Bible, must make known the truth that effects our sanctification.

The exposition given, supposes also, the TRUTH of a palpable absurdity; that God can love us, while we possess no goodness for him to love. Till we *love* God, we *hate* him, and to hate infinite excellence, is to be totally depraved. This continues to be the character of every man till he loves his Creator. Hence, till then it is impossible that God should be pleased with him. He assures us, "I love them that love me;" implying that all others he does not love. God cannot view with complacency the man who has no pleasure in the contemplation of infinite moral excellence. A being so depraved is not worthy of Divine regard. "God is angry with the wicked every day," and hence is continually angry with every man who does not love him. Should an unregenerated man, therefore, hear some supernatural voice proclaim, "beloved of the Lord," he ought to doubt whether the revelation came from heaven. For God will not reveal to him that which the Bible would contradict.

The exposition which we are noticing, exhibits depravity as confined to the understanding, and he surely is not very extensively depraved, who has merely mistaken a matter of fact. The Scriptures, however, exhibit a darker picture. They speak of the unsanctified heart as the seat of malicious passions, as full of all bitterness, as issuing evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. We are told that "every

imagination of the thought of the heart is evil, only evil continually." We are assured that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." The errors of the understanding, are ascribed to the influence of the heart. "A deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, or say, Is there not a lie in my right hand." Another objection to this exposition is, that it exhibits a religion purely selfish. He who loves God merely because he conceives that God loves him, can be said only to love himself. But the religion of the Bible is spoken of as a charity that seeketh not her own. It discovers in holiness an intrinsic value, which renders it lovely for its own sake, independently of any relation which it may sustain to us.

This exposition is contrary to all the examples given us in Scripture of apostolic preaching. It was the aim of the apostles to make their hearers see their own vileness, and feel that the wrath of God hung over them. Says an apostle, "by the terrors of the Lord we persuade men." But what can this mean, if there is no other depravity than what consists in a mistake of the understanding? But no apostle preached a doctrine like this, and no man may thus preach without the danger of contradicting the records of eternal truth.

There is *another exposition* of this text which has a higher claim upon our faith. It is this. If God had not viewed us with a benevolent regard, even when we were dead in sins, we should have continued his enemies. Divine compassion originated the plan, and provided the means, of redemption. The same benevolence led him to awaken, convict, and renew us. We are Christians, because God viewed us with pity, and made us the willing and thankful recipients of his mercy. Thus we love him because he first loved us, because he was led by his good will to change our hearts, to give us holy affections.

The difference in the two expositions is this. The first, which I consider as altogether incorrect, represents the love of God to us as our only motive for loving him. The second, which although perhaps deficient, certainly approximates toward the truth, represents the benevolence of God as that which moved him to prepare the way for our redemption, and bring our hearts to love him.

This exposition accords with the main object of this epistle, which dwells much on the love of God, manifested in providing redemption for our miserable world. We read in the context, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live

through him. Herein was love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation of our sins." In the gospel written by this same apostle, we read, "God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."

This exposition accords with other portions of Scripture. The Bible everywhere lays the foundation of the Christian Church in the everlasting love of God to our miserable world. In no case would a sinner ever love God, if God had not first loved him. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." And "we also enjoy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." Thus the love of God is considered as laying the foundation of our salvation, and it must, of course, be the first cause of our love to him. But

It is thought there is a deficiency in this last exposition. Certainly none will deny but that the great scheme of redemption has its foundation in the eternal love of God; that his grace furnished the atonement, and that his Spirit carries our hearts to love, and finishes our sanctification; hence the love of God is the cause of love to him.

But, on the other hand, it is contended, that God's love to us is a proper motive for loving him; not the only motive, it is true; for if we love him *only* because we apprehend that he loves us, our affections are purely selfish. But why not love him for what he is, and yet our love increases on discovering that he loves us? If the question in controversy be simply this, may God's love to us become a proper motive of our love to him? the question, it would seem, must be answered in the affirmative. Compassion in the heart of God for miserable beings is a lovely trait in his character; and when discovered, is a reason why we should love him: and if we may love him because he felt compassion for other miserable beings, why not because he had pity on us? Hence, when we discover that the God we have hated has always received us with compassion, this discovery should awaken our love.

That God can exercise no other love to impenitent sinners but that of good will, there scarcely needs an argument to prove. No unregenerate man, whose *heart* is at enmity against God, can possibly be to him an object of complacency. If then he wait till he discover that God is pleased with him before he can love his Ma-

ker, he must wait for ever. But the idea that God is a merciful being enters, or ought to enter, into every contemplation of the Divine character. We are no more required to love a God all *justice*, *holiness*, and *truth*, than a God of all *mercy*. Why may it not happen, then, that a sinner, when he first contemplates the God of heaven with seriousness, may think of his good will to our miserable world, and to himself, with others? And while he looks at God, and his heart is changed into love, this very trait in the Divine character may be the first thing discovered, and may become a most powerful attractive to his affections. Thus he loves God, among other reasons, because God first loved him. The text has unquestionable reference to a kind of love felt by the Creator for his creatures while dead in sin; and this would be no other than mere good will. This trait in the Divine character, and there is no other more prominent, the sinner may discover as soon as any. Nor would it be surprising if this should be the first attribute of Jehovah that should attract his gaze. It would be mistaking the true character of God, if one should conceive of him as destitute of compassion for the wretched. Still the good man will love the whole of the Divine character. If his benevolence engrosses the whole of our affections, it needs no argument to prove, that our hearts are not yet right with God. This is the danger to be avoided. Many, all on a sudden, have seemed to be absorbed with a sense of the Divine goodness, who yet manifested an incurable enmity to every view of God as holy, sovereign, and unchangeable. One trait of the Divine character had caught their admiration, and for a time they were filled with love; but when, at length, they were constrained to view God in some other aspect, their love subsided. They could not contemplate, but with a frown, those doctrines which do honor to his severer attributes. We must love the Divine character *as it is*. The God we worship must be holy as well as merciful, else we do not worship the Jehovah of the Bible.

Probably with a view to guard men against a selfish religion, the character of God has been exhibited in false colors. It has been said, "God made man upright, and then exerted a positive agency in making him a rebel. He contrives a plan of redemption, but reprobates some in the outset, fits them for hell, places them in that world, makes the righteous rejoice while the 'smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever,' and may do so because they are all his creatures." Now I very much question whether in this exhibition, we are presented with a correct view

of the Divine character. The Scriptures do not give us this view of God. While he is there exhibited as a sovereign, who does his pleasure in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, they also describe him as a God of mercy. He bears long with the being he hates, and pities the very wretch he destroys. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim" ? Now why should the divine benevolence be undiscovered in those perfections which constitute the object of our worship ?

But on the other hand, God has been exhibited as scarcely possessing any other attribute than mercy. This has been spoken of as his darling attribute, while his sovereignty, his purity, and his veracity have been obscured in the dazzling light of the favorite perfection. Perhaps such a view of God is still more dangerous than the other. Give him no desire to guide his operations, no sovereignty to render his throne august, no inflexibility of veracity to ensure the execution of his law, no holiness to render sin hateful, no omniscience to search out the culprit, and no power to make himself respected, and the veriest fiend of perdition will presume on his mercy. No man is too depraved to love a God like this. But no such God exists, and every such hope in his salvation, is without foundation.

"A pardoning God is jealous still
For his own holiness."

God will own neither of these characters. We must leave him in possession of all his attributes, and still love him. Mercy and truth must meet together. We must adore him as possessed of every holy and gracious attribute, and whichsoever of these first attracts our gaze should melt us into love.

We see thus why religion in different persons wears a very different aspect. One has viewed too exclusively the mercy of God, and hence his religion, though full of praise, is deficient in solemnity and humility. There attends it a lightness which sometimes begets a doubt of its sincerity. Another has reflected too exclusively on the severer attributes of the Divine character, and has almost forgotten that compassion has any place in the heart of God ; hence his religion will be likely to be gloomy. He will be prone to fear and adore his Maker, but will hardly dare to praise. The medium of these extremes is the religion that does honor to the whole of the Divine character. It is a religion, pleasant, cheerful and humble ; a religion which will render the soul happy, and which God will approve and honor.

A PLEA FOR THE SCRIPTURES.

THE Bible professes to be the book of God, inspired by his Spirit, and sent to be the guide to life and salvation of this ruined world. It would seem that there could be but *one* opinion respecting this book; but there are *two*. While some have accepted, others have rejected it, as being a revelation from God. Two questions then arise: "*Why do unbelievers reject it?*" and "*Why do believers receive it?*" These questions, permit me to answer.

Why do unbelievers reject the Bible? I shall notice now merely the more common objections.

I would here mention—*First, The exclusiveness of its religion.* All other religions, unless the Mohammedan be excepted, are more catholic than the religion of the Bible. The worshippers of Thor and Jupiter and Moloch would have placed the image of Jesus Christ in their temples and worshiped him, if his disciples would have reciprocated this catholicism, and would have worshiped the images of their gods. If they would have only yielded the point that there is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved, there would have been no quarrel between Christianity and heathenism.

And if this compromise could now be made, and Christianity did not require a belief of the whole Bible history, and all the Bible doctrines and predictions together, with the deity of Jesus Christ, and the practice of all the duties of the Bible, there would be no contest. But all this goes to say that men would not quarrel with the Bible, if they might disbelieve it, and be saved without it, and pour their contempt upon it.

But is it not reasonable to believe that if God give a revelation to this world, he will give it to *the whole world*, and require all men to receive it all, and make it the *only* way to everlasting life! If not thus broad in its application and its claims, it becomes a partial salvation, and thus it must tell how many and who of the human family may feel themselves interested in its contents.

But the objector inquires, why has it not been given to the *whole world*? why has God published a system of salvation, and left three quarters, and in some ages almost the world's entire population, without a knowledge of his will? If this objection could not be satisfactorily answered, it would present no formidable barrier to our

faith. If God pleases to make a written revelation, to a part only of a rebellious world, by what law has either part the right to complain? Or if it claim to be a general revelation, and is partially circulated, what then? Rebels may not demand overtures of pardon. Moreover the whole world, had not the carnal mind been opposed to a divine communication, might have had the bible. Had the world been ready to receive it, as the Gentiles must have had report of it, no province had been without it. The people that God chose, as the depositories of the revelation, were in the very midst of the more enlightened nations, and it is rather difficult to account for the fact, that all nations did not acquire the bible from that central position where it was inspired. How could Greece and Rome and Babylon and Egypt lie so hard by Israel and not have opportunity to receive the Scriptures. Indeed it did go probably among all nations, and they set so light by it that they lost it. And yet we can see wise purposes answered by many nations being long without it. They thus have abundant opportunity to act out the native temper of their hearts, and establish the history of the apostacy. In the meantime those who have the Bible may learn how basely they have neglected and are neglecting their duty in not disseminating it.

But says the objector, I learn from the Bible that those are to perish who have *never enjoyed its light*. Yes, if they sin against the light they have. They perish however, not because they were so unfortunate as not to have the bible, but because the "invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; and because that when they knew God they glorified him not as God; hence they are without excuse." If any assert that God will destroy the heathen for not knowing what they had not the means to know, their controversy is with him direct. And if they reject the bible because they think it so teaches, they may be found to have reasoned falsely, and to have destroyed themselves by their inquisitiveness into a case they do not understand and that does not secure them. If they would contend that *God may not destroy men*, unless he first give them a written revelation of his will, and give them opportunity to reject an offered Savior, they are to see to it that they adopt a sentiment like this, on arguments that God will approve, else they undo themselves by their own vain philosophy.

The *discrepancies of the bible*, constitute a powerful objection to its reception. The fact we do not dispute that there are some detached passages which appear to be contradictory. But a candid mind, acquainted with the bible, and willing to see those discrep-

ancies reconciled, will rather be strengthened than disturbed in his faith by them. Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, yet Jesus baptized not, but his disciples. He did it as Soloman built the temple, i. e. it was done by his sanction: It is appointed to all men once to die, yet if a man keep my sayings, he shall never see death: the one means natural and the other spiritual or eternal death. God will not repent, will not change his mind and counsel as men do from want of foresight; yet it repented the Lord that he had made man, and that he had set up Saul to be king; that is, he changed his course of procedure as men do when they change their minds: all said in condescension to our weak capacities.

The genealogies of Matthew, and Luke differ, without contradiction, because Matthew wrote in Hebrew, principally for the use of the Jews, and therefore traces the pedigree of Jesus Christ, downward from Abraham to David, and through Solomon to Jacob and Joseph the reputed father of Christ. Luke's pedigree was written in Greek for the use of the Gentiles and traced from Heli, the father of Mary, to David through Nathan and Abraham to Adam. As to the order of narrating events in the gospel, we are to remember that Matthew and John were constant companions of our Lord, and would be most likely to narrate things in their order of time, while Luke and Mark followed the order in which things were narrated to them by the apostles, hence many discrepancies in the order of time. One apostle notices one circumstance, and another some other one, in the same narration; here an apparent discrepancy in this story, but no contradiction. For instance, one apostle makes the *two thieves* and another but *one* above the Savior as they hung on the cross; but we see in a moment, that the one stated what he saw at an earlier hour, when both the thieves were impenitent, while the other gives us the state of things after one of the thieves was converted, and the other continued to rail. When Paul was on his way to Damascus and the Savior called him, one Evangelist says that his companion heard not the voice that addressed him, while another says they did hear the voice. But how easy to perceive that they might all hear the sound and Paul only distinguish what was said. We should gather from one Evangelist that Christ's celebrated sermon was delivered on a mountain, and from another on the plain, but who can be ignorant that when a mountain drops gradually into a plain there is a spot which one might attach to the mountain and another to the plain. Two Evangelists say, on a certain occasion, that after *six days*, Jesus taketh Peter and James and John his

brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, another says about an *eight days* after. Now nothing can be plainer than that the last of the three includes in the eight days the day of the discourse and the day of the transfiguration, which, added to the six days between, make the eight. Thus every discrepancy in the Bible can easily be reconciled by a candid mind. Instead of unsettling our faith in the Bible, they constitute in fact, as we shall see directly, a strong corroborative testimony of its authenticity.

Another objection to the bible has been drawn *from its history*, especially the severity of some of the christian dispensations there recorded. The extirpation of the Canaanites for instance. On this subject let me say, that the Canaanites were notoriously wicked, and deserved to be destroyed. The objection lies against Israel being employed to inflict the judgments they deserved. And why not employ men to do it with as much propriety as famine, or pestilence, or earthquake, or wild beasts? Besides it may be doubted whether Israel had not a better right to the soul than the Canaanites, and were not its first proprietors; and if so they had a prior right to the lands, and might demand their right, and if God so directed, used the sword to obtain it. And this answered most others, that infidels have made a handle of, are answered. If men deserved to be destroyed, if nations merit extermination, God may treat them as they deserve, and may employ what instruments he pleases in the execution of his wrath. If he command men to avenge him on his adversaries, it is impeaching his righteousness and his sovereignty to complain of his dealings. "May I not do what I will with mine own," is the only answer in the case, that should satisfy every honest mind.

The *inconsistencies of professors of religion* have ever constituted one of the boldest pleas of infidelity. On this subject there are a few things to be said which it seems must be sufficient to silence every cavil. Do those who complain feel grieved that Christians are not more holy? Do they then practice themselves a better morality than the christian? Are they *more or less* pleased with Christians, the more holy they are? These questions are easily answered. We ask again, do they blame Christians for not coming up to the Bible standard of morality? If so, then it is not the Bible but the Christians they would censure. The Bible thus teaches a good and substantial morality? Or do they wish to be understood that the Bible bears Christians out in their sins, and is of course a bad book, and cannot be from God. If so, and this must be the ground they take, else how have the faults of pro-

fessors any concern with the authenticity of the Scriptures ; then we ask how does it happen again,

That the *unreasonable strictness* of the Bible morality is also made to constitute an objection to its authenticity ? Perhaps no objection is more common. Christians are the subjects of sneer and contempt, more probably than for any other reason, because of their scrupulous regard for Bible precepts, forbidding them this and that and the other (as the world says) innocent gratification. Now the enemies of divine revelation may not bring it as one charge against the bible that it teaches so loose a morality that the Christians who shape their lives by it are not so moral as other men ; and yet object to the Bible that its morality is immeasurably rigid, forbidding the innocent indulgence of the right affections. One of these theories destroys the other, and men should be more consistent than to hold to them both. Either admit that the Bible teaches a bad morality, and is to be considered as the cause of the sins of God's people ; or it teaches a good morality, and God's people do not regulate their lives by it, and thus the quarrel is not with the Bible but with the hypocrites who pretend to believe it.

Another objection to the Bible is drawn from the *tumults occasioned by its advocates*. The charge brought against the apostles was in the very spirit of this objection : " Those that have turned the world upside down, have come hither also." And our Lord predicted that this would be the effect of his religion. He came not to bring peace but a sword. His gospel would set a man at variance with his son, and the son with his father ; the mother with her daughter, and the daughter with her mother ; the mother-in-law with her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law with her mother-in-law ; and a man's foes should be, from that time, they of his own household. Now there is one question which every honest man should settle before he uses this argument against the religion of the Gospel. Does religion make war with the peace and happiness of the world, or do the men of the world make war with religion ? The angels went down to Sodom, and their coming excited a tumult, but were the angels the aggressors, or the people of Sodom ? The coming of the apostles to certain places raised a commotion, but was the tumult excited by some attack which the apostles made upon their quietness, or an attack made upon them by their adversaries ? Jesus Christ disturbed the quiet of the world more than any other one that ever dwelt on its surface, but was he a turbulent and warlike spirit, or did the world *without cause* swear its peace against him ? Is his religion pas-

sionate, or proud, or overbearing, or selfish, or turbulent? Did he teach his disciples to resist evil, or to be meek?—to contend for their rights, or take joyfully the spoiling of their goods? To aspire after place, and honor, and office, or to hold themselves the subjects of a kingdom which is not of this world? When they would put him on a throne, did he second their measures, or hide himself from their notice? If the fault is not in this case with the Bible, nor yet with the men of the world who we have supposed waged the quarrel, but with the Christians who do not imbibe the spirit of their Master nor of the Gospel, then why are the faults of professors in this case made an argument against the Bible? The Bible is a good book, and the calamity is that Christians will not imbibe its spirit. And Christians lament this far more than do infidels.

The *hardness of the doctrines* of the Bible constitutes an objection to its authenticity. Entire depravity, which allows not an unregenerate man the credit of having one single right affection in his heart; and the sovereignty of God, which gives him entire control of his creatures; and the necessity of regeneration, which reflects upon men as all wrong in their principles and conduct till they are born anew; the necessity of the Spirit's influence which renders men dependant for the agency that sanctifies them—all the doctrines of the Bible are offensive, and together constitute a creed at war with all the native principles of the heart. And the enemies of revelation hardly know here what ground to take, whether to own that these doctrines are in the Bible, and discard the Bible; or to accuse the Christians of teaching what is not in the Bible, and discard them, and become themselves the professors of its religion. Hence the division of the great family of unbelievers into infidels avowedly, and Unitarians with all their variety of subdivisions.

It is not an unfrequent objection to the Bible, that its sanctions are *unnecessarily severe*. The grand point of attack here is, everlasting misery, threatened for the sins of this short life. Men argue, that it is inconsistent with the Divine goodness, to make sensitive beings, and suffer them so to offend him as to become, by this means, eternally miserable. They do not see, and will not believe, that sin deserves so prolonged a punishment. They do not see why, in every case, God cannot freely pardon the sinner, whether he repent or not, and thus save him from so fearful a doom. But who can say how much punishment sin deserves? and who assert that, that if any less punishment was inflicted than is deserved, it might not do infinite mischief in the Divine government? Who can show, conclusively, that agents would have been erected

without leaving them at liberty to undo themselves for ever? And who dare say that agents had better not have been erected, than to have been placed in such risk? Who dare assert, that it would have comported at all with the Divine government, to harden sinners without an atonement, and without repentance, or pardon them through the atonement, without their voluntary acceptance of it? Who dares assert, that the ruin of a part of our race in hell may not be the grand and the only means that can restrain other worlds from open revolt. Hence, who can be presumptuous enough to affirm, that the ruin eternal of some rational immortal beings may not comport with the infinite benevolence of God?

And the Bible ought not to be rejected on mere negative argument. Men should show, *certainly* and *positively*, that eternal punishment cannot be just, or useful, or consistent with the Divine goodness, before they found any argument upon it against the Bible. And here again, as in the last case, we find the same men embracing both sides of the alternative. They will both argue, that no such doctrine is in the Bible; and also reject the Bible, because *it is there*. There is nothing more common than to find a man a universalist and an infidel too; though inconsistent as it is common. To make the Bible prove some false religion, and embrace that religion, and then deny the Bible, is to industriously lay rocks under one's house, and glory in its stability, and then assert the rocks to be mere clay.

We would name other objections that have been brought against the Bible, but they are all futile, like those that have been noticed. The book has been rejected, because men like not to retain God in their knowledge. The evidences that establish its divinity are satisfactory to every mind that the Holy Ghost has made honest. Let us look at them.

I promised to give the reasons *why believers in Divine revelation receive the Bible as the word of God*.

I offer, as the first reason, the *impossibility of accounting for its existence but on the supposition that it was given by inspiration of God*. Who would write such a book? They could not be good men, unless they were inspired; for they declare that they wrote as they were inspired by the Holy Ghost; hence are found liars, if there is no such thing as inspiration. They profess to have received their communications from heaven, and to declare the word of the Lord. Moreover, good men would have no motive for writing such a book, if not inspired. It offered them no means of gain, or of rising to power or influence in this life; and if false, no prospect of immortality. They must have honors, if they were

men of sense, and their writings declare this, that bonds and imprisonment, instead of honors, would await them, for so condemning the world as they have in the Bible; and it would seem most of them suffered death. Hence good men did not write the Bible, unless they wrote by inspiration of God.

And bad men *would not*, for reasons that are still more unanswerable. They would not write a book condemning themselves, a book that bad men have hated in every age since it was written. They would have no motive. Suppose them convinced that the book would do the world good, such men are not desirous to do good. And they could easily see that they could hope for no reward in this world, and they have no idea of suffering now in order to be happy hereafter.

And beside, we have indubitable evidence that it was written by many different men in very different circumstances of life, and in different ages. Hence the necessity of a great amount of concert, which we cannot suppose to have existed without a miracle, more difficult to believe than anything we are required to believe in the Bible. Bad men cannot be supposed to have written the Bible.

There is perhaps one other supposition, that is, that good men wrote the book, under a mistaken impression that they were inspired by the Holy Ghost: they were self-deceived. This however is incredible; for they surely would know, if they were sane, that they were or were not supernaturally assisted in the work; and the Bible wears no marks of being the effusions of distraction.

Where then did the Bible come from, if it is not what it professes to be, the word of the Lord. This one argument, if there were no other, has always cured my infidelity. To doubt whether the Bible came from God, I must believe what is infinitely more incredible than to believe the Bible inspired by his Spirit, and sent to be the guide and the salvation of ruined man.

The *unparalleled morality of the Bible* is a powerful testimony that it came from God. Search all the uninspired writings of antiquity, and cull out carefully every moral precept, and put them together, and the whole will not contain an amount of sound morality, equal to some insulated precept of the Bible. If a Grecian or Roman poet or orator hit upon some wise saying, resembling even remotely some precept of the Bible, it denominated him *the wise man*. Their writings constituted no sufficient guide to holiness or happiness, suited at all to the exigences of a ruined world. A spirit of benevolence, of forgiveness, of meekness, of humility, were untaught in their writings, and evidently lay beyond their

conceptions. And there were wise men on earth, there was talent, there was the power of discovery, of invention, but there was nothing like a sound morality invented. Hence, how did it happen that all at once there was thrown out upon the world one book, like no other that had ever been heard of, filled with moral precepts, like nothing that had ever been known since the world began. And this not written by a Seneca, a Plato, or a Socrates, the wisest of antiquity, but by a company of men, few, if any of whom had been schooled in the sciences of antiquity. Some of them it is true, were kings; others shepherds; others fishermen, and tent-makers; none of them celebrated for other writings, which had attracted the gaze of a world. They are not heard of as men of science and literature, till they write the Bible, and lo! there was never any book like it. You will find in it ten thousand precepts so grand and finished that the poorest of them all, if we may call a heavenly precept poor, outshines in excellence the richest moral maxim that ever graced the page of any book that the wisest man living had ever written. Now, how can all this happen without a Divine agency? How can such a book be considered of no higher origin than a polluted and benighted man?

And what we may properly notice here, The writers, though born in countries and ages far separated, and without the possibility of concert, and taken from every variety of station and company, all teach the same morality, with not a single discrepancy that is not easily harmonized. Now to believe that all this could happen without a Divine agency, is to exhibit a credulity never displayed in the belief of truth. The infidel must here surmount a barrier that he would not meet with in giving his full assent to every line of the Bible. I notice again,

The *change of character* for the better that the *reading and preaching of the Gospel produces*. We have seen men under its influence putting off the character they had always worn, and changed in their temper and conduct till they were emphatically new men. The drunkard has become sober, the profane civil, the debauched pure, the idle industrious, the quarrelsome meek, the churl liberal; from no other cause that would be seen but the instructions of the Bible. The Bible tells us of an efficient cause, impressing bible truth upon the conscience and the heart, the Spirit of God, using the language of inspiration as his sword by which he divides asunder the soul and spirit, &c. But the Bible, were it not inspired truth, would effect no such change; and the Holy Spirit, were not the Gospel inspired, would not use it as his in-

strument. Hence no account would be given of the astonishing changes which the Gospel produces, should we abandon the idea of its divine original. The Shaster and the Koran, let not the sword go with them, would produce no conversions, and if they did would change men for the worse. And this evidence of inspiration is always at hand. The effects I have noticed are produced every year in all lands where the Gospel is. Thus have we a living testimony, in every conversion, that the Bible came from heaven.

The *discrepancies of the Bible*, while there is a harmony of design and of doctrine running through all its pages, is evidence of its truth. I have noticed some of these discrepancies in the early part of my plea, and now refer to them as I promised, as evidence of the truth of the Bible. They show that there was among the writers no concert, and no design in any of them to deceive. Had the Bible been a mere human fabrication, framed with intention to deceive, more pains had been taken to avoid any appearance of contradiction. One writer would not have made Jacob's family which went down into Egypt to consist of threescore and ten souls, and another of threescore and fifteen; though very easily reconciled. One Evangelist would not have fixed on the *third* hour and another the *sixth*, as the time of the Savior's crucifixion. Care would have been taken lest their apparent discrepancies should have discredited the whole story. When men utter only truths, they have no fear of contradicting themselves, or of contradicting others who utter the same truths or other truths. In courts of law, nothing sooner throws suspicion over the testimony, than a minute circumstantial agreement between two witnesses.

Circumstantial variations are proof that there has been no adjusting of testimony one to the other. And honest men will come to the same conclusion in canvassing the evidences of divine revelation. I once asked a confirmed Deist what was his best evidence against the truth of inspiration. He answered, the contradictions, as he termed them. He stated some of the more prominent, and heard my expositions, and my assurances that my own mind once labored on this very point; but since the trial of a certain cause which I attended, where two witnesses had collated the circumstances of their testimony, intending to make out a lie to be the truth, I had viewed the discrepancies of the Bible as a solid argument of its divinity. He took a day to think on the subject, and then declared that I had sapped the foundation of his infidelity. From that time onward, he espoused the Bible as the book of God.

The accuracy with which the Bible describes the human heart proves

its divinity, unanswerably, to every man who has had a knowledge of himself. I know this argument can have force only with such as have been the subjects of conviction—and most men have been, to a greater or less extent. The man who has been merely convicted, but has not repented, would see in the moment of alarm that the Bible, if I may so speak, knew him well. It described the workings of unbelief, the resistance he made to divine truth, the reluctance with which he received, on many subjects, the testimony of God, and the bare assent he gave, when he could withstand no longer, to the truth of the distinguishing doctrines of revelation. It laid naked the self-righteousness of the heart, its mighty effort to be justified by its own doings to the neglect of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It told him all things that ever he had done, and thus established its divinity. It made him, through the Spirit's influence, to bear the iniquities of his youth, to smite upon his thigh, to be ashamed and confounded. It caused his sins to find him out; and if, finally, he did not repent or believe, yet has he not forgotten, nor will he forget, when he is lost, how piercing was the eye of divine truth in that period of his alarm: a reason here, perhaps, why, of all men, none become so enormously wicked, as those who have once been brought very nigh to the kingdom of God. It must require, in one whose heart has been laid naked to his own gaze, a desperate resistance to enable him to overcome the obstacles that block up his way to life and salvation. And if his convictions resulted in his becoming a new creature, he has still more conclusive evidence of the divinity of the Scriptures, as they have portrayed the emotions of piety, and shown their power to melt a heart of stone. The regenerate man, who alone is willing to be searched, has discovered in the Bible a kind of omniscience. The remains of his depravity are there depicted, as with the brilliant sunbeams: the struggle made by the flesh to overcome the emotions of the spirit, and the fierce and wondrous conflict between the old and the new man, all the exercises of his holy nature, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, are there exactly described, fast as his renewed heart puts them forth. Hence both the Christian and the sinner that has been awakened—and those include about the whole of the human family found in Christian lands—have evidence of the divinity of the Scriptures in the wondrous power it has to enter and examine the human heart. And all men, if they would suffer themselves to think, would find themselves so searched out in the Bible, that they would want no other evidence of its divine authority.

The *prophecies* of Scripture which have been in a process of fulfilment, long since the most sceptical will acknowledge the Bible was written, prove its Divine origin. That the prophecies concerning the destruction of Jerusalem were extant, and extensively read while yet Jerusalem was standing, is a historical fact, which no candid deist will doubt. And who but God could so minutely describe the siege in all its minutiae, even to the picture of one of the Roman standards? "Wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together."

The prophecies concerning the Jews, their scattered, and peeled, and persecuted, and homeless, and enslaved, and insulated condition; and which are in fact a history of their present state, is an overwhelming evidence of the Divinity of the Scriptures. What other nation was ever conquered, and did not soon lose themselves among the conquerors, so that in a very few years, they could not be distinguished from the mass of the population around them?

The present exertions to spread the everlasting gospel, the readiness with which many run to and fro, and knowledge is increased, evinces that one who *knew* predicted the event. Sabbath schools, and Bible classes, and the progress of the sentiments of freedom, all say that God inspired the Scriptures. "Thy children shall all be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children. They shall sit every one under his vine and fig-tree, with none to molest or make them afraid."

O! who can resist the arguments that establish the truth of the Scriptures? How can a sinner stand waiting, before he submits, till other evidence be given that God has spoken to him in his word? Is he not afraid that God will *withdraw* the overture of mercy, instead of giving other and surer tokens that he has authorized that overture to be made? How long does he think God will stretch out his hand to save, if sinners waiting for other assurances that it is his very hand, will not suffer him to pluck them from the wrath to come? Never has there been any case like this under the government of God, a case where mercy was offered, and the perishing, through unbelief of the offer, suffered a total and irretrievable ruin to ensue. Devils had no reprieve offered, had no overture made, and did not put on their chains of darkness through the stubbornness of their infidelity. Had they been offered a return, and a restoration, who can tell but every spirit of them would have come back to loyalty and duty, and God had no opportunity to show his wrath, and make his power known in their signal and fatal discomfiture. And if the inhabitants of any other

world have fallen, none can say that they have not perished as devils have, without the offer of restoration, or if the offer has been made, they have not all put forth a faith in that offer that has secured their entire redemption. But our world is to exhibit, whatever is true of others, the strange spectacle of beings that, having become rebellious, and then, to deepen the darkness of their character, have disputed the validity of the pardon offered, till the overture was withdrawn, and remittance eternally withheld.

And yet the admonitions given from the dying beds of unbelievers have been terrible and repeated in all the ages of infidelity. One would not love to die as did Voltaire and Paine. Principles that yield no support in the dying hour, an immortal being should fear to indulge. A wise man would choose to provide himself a prop against the period when his strength must fail him ; would choose to build where no storm could overthrow his habitation.

How horrid to live sustained by the miseries of a dream, and in death wake to the reality that a pardon has been withdrawn, because life was spent in cavilling with the testimony that sustained the validity of the overture ! And what other evidence could God have given ? Should he have come down himself to read the pardon in our ears ? He did. Should he have sent angels down to tell the world that their Lord had come ? He did. Should he have made the earth quake to its centre, and put the sun out, that man's attention might be arrested to the proclamation of peace and pardon ? He did so. Should he have sent forth an influence strong and mighty as that which shall raise the dead, to subdue to loyalty some millions of those deaf and infatuated rebels ? He did so. He sent forth that influence, and called out these millions from their dungeons, and brake off their fetters, and they have stood and plead with others that they would believe and live. And still this remains the same infidel world that it ever has been, carping at the testimony of God, and daring his anger, when they should be wooing his pardoning mercy.

“ O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord ! ” And if earth will not hear, may God speedily do his own work, and grant the Spirit's saving influence to mould this rebel world into better form, and cure its plagues of unbelief, and cause those waters to flow out from his sanctuary, that shall carry salvation and joy to the earth's darkest and dreariest and farthest territories. Beneficent God, bless and save them that hitherto would not believe thy word.—AMEN.



















